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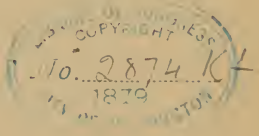
VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

AND

OTHER DISCOURSES

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM



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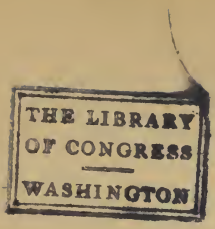

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LIFE AS TEST OF CREED.

I take a text this morning, but not from scripture, from Pope's Essay on Man.

> "For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
> His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

The poem from which these lines are taken was written to give expression to the system of Lord Bolingbroke, a wit, statesman, courtier, man of fashion, and speculative philosopher of the last century. He was a leading "infidel" writer, a propagator of infidel opinions, a friend of Voltaire. His system was deistical, a form of natural religion as opposed to revealed religion. He did not go so far as to say that no revelation from Deity was possible, but he did go so far as to say that no revelation could be proved by historical evidence. His criticisms on the bible, on the creeds of the church, on the institutions of religion as practiced in his day, were searching and severe. He lavished all the power of a cutting sarcasm on the supersti-

tion of his generation. His belief was in natural law; his system had its root in the idea that the will of Deity expresses itself in the established habits of the universe, and that a faithful worship of Deity consisted, not in rites, or prayers, or priestly observances, but in a faithful conformity with the conditions of life, a compliance with the laws of the universe, as they were understood.

It is easy to see that the sentiment expressed in the lines which I have quoted from Pope's "Essay on Man" was of immense importance and reach. To say that the true worship is a life and not a creed, that the conflict over forms and modes of faith is useless, vain and harmful, that the test of complete observance of the divine laws is a noble natural character, strikes at the very root of all religious institutions and beliefs. To say this, is to claim for the world of experience, for the conduct of life, the vital hearty interest that has heretofore been given to matters that concern the supernatural world. It is to claim once more, nay, for the first time, honor, respect, and service for ordinary things. It is associating business, society, public and private life with sanctity. It is to recall the thoughts, desires and purposes of mankind from things entirely out of their vision and beyond their reach, to things that lie immediately about them, that concern them in their daily walk

and conversation, and decide for them whether their lives in this world shall be good for something or good for nothing. The acceptance of a principle like this, would work nothing less than a complete revolution in religious thought, feeling and observance. The instant the controlling forces of the world should accept as a leading principle the thoughts embodied in these lines of Pope, at once the current would flow away from the instituted observances of Christendom, and would apply all their power to turn the machinery which carries on society and the individual life.

Thus far, therefore, in its general scope and bearing, the principle enunciated in the "Essay on Man" is of immeasurable importance. But when we take it to pieces, criticise it point by point, its weakness becomes evident. "His can't be wrong whose life is in the right." *Whose life is in the right?* Does not the principle assume that somebody's life—your life, perhaps—yours as well as anybody's, is the standard by which faith may be tested? Does it not assume that some one type of person is to be allowed to set up his life, or perhaps his conception of what life should be, his ideal of character, as the rule by which all creeds are to be judged? The looseness of thinking betrayed in such a position is something extraordinary. It seems to be imagined that it is easier to determine

what rightness, rectitude, equity, justice, goodness are, than to determine what truth is; that it is easier to decide what conduct ought to be under any particular circumstances, than it is to decide what we should reasonably think about the order and constitution of the world. It is true that we can never arrive at absolutely correct opinions on questions relating to the order and constitution of the world; the search for truth is exceedingly long and difficult. Nay, to find the ultimate truth is more than this generation will ever succeed in, or many generations to come. Indeed, it is beyond human quest, so far as we can see. Still, it *is* possible to strike upon certain leading principles; it *is* possible to get on the track of some leading ideas; it *is* possible to find a key which may open some of the chambers of knowledge. It is possible to reach reasonable conclusions on many deep problems of life. But who shall say what goodness is, what the normal type of character is under existing human circumstances?

Take any particular case which may occur to you, a case touching immediate conduct on the plane of daily experience. Is it so easy to know what one ought to do, how one ought to conduct himself, how one should bear himself towards this or that person? The moment we touch upon a question of character, the moment we raise a rule of conduct,

that moment we are lost in perplexities. The practical issues are not only the most pressing and momentous, they are also the most complicated.

It is not easier to find out what is good than it is to find out what is true. When the apostle Paul says, "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good," we imagine him to be saying very simple and conclusive things. And what he says, was simple and conclusive as he meant it; for his notion of what was good kept within the narrow utilities, proprieties and moralities of his small christian community. But with us the case is much more intricate. To find out what is good baffles the keenest mind.

Furthermore, how many lives are entitled to be called "correct" lives? I mean straight lives, that consistently hold together, that are organized on a principle, that accord with an idea? How many lives are more than fragments? We live morally from hand to mouth, feeling our way among sentiments. We are creatures of tradition, blown about by every wind of doctrine. To-day we feel thus, to-morrow we may feel otherwise. Our purposes are halting; our intentions faint; our convictions flag. Our controlling ideas are not the same from month to month. How few people there are who plow a straight furrow,—we will not say through a crooked world, but through such a world as theirs

is to plow in. It may be very limited; it may be very smooth; it may be very tranquil. A sudden flaw of wind strikes our little vessel; it careens and goes down. A sorrow, a disappointment, a stroke of calamity finds us entirely unprepared. We thought we knew something; we thought we stood upon a basis; we thought we had a firm hand upon the helm, but we had not. It was a dream, a notion, a legend, which we had read in a book, a precept we heard in a sermon. It was a fiction that ran through us like an idle rill, gurgled through our sentiments, but gave no music to our life. From how many living people, from how many known characters would you undertake to infer a creed? Whose qualities guarantee wisdom? What dispositions authenticate beliefs? Of the various creeds, notions, guesses, scraps from all sorts of scripture, which possess any particular mind, how many are definitely traceable to the moral attributes of their authors? Will the character of the wisest teacher justify his teachings? The looseness of thinking on this point is amazing. Men are continually associating characters and opinions in the most lawless manner, connecting good beliefs with bad morals, and bad beliefs with good morals in a way to drive a sane man wild. It is even common to associate one man's conduct with an other man's creed, as we see men hold the faith of a pastor answerable

for the misbehaviour of a parishioner. This is done constantly, as matter of course, by thousands of people, in the most enlightened modern communities. The truth is that to reason from life back to creed is an exceedingly difficult task; an achievement quite beyond the reach of the ordinary mind.

Whose life will you take as the standard? Alexander Pope's, the man who wrote the lines quoted above? Pope is said to have had some excellent qualities. He loved his mother, was faithful to her in her old age, took care of her when she was poor. He had a sort of clever capacity for friendship. He is known to have told the truth several times. But he was envious, cross-grained, cunning, revengeful. Let a friend say an uncomplimentary word about his verses, and he would put him on the pillory of his satire, and make him contemptible to all living people. He could hate with a tenacity and bitterness of rancor which is seldom exemplified. He wrote the "Essay on Man" to glorify the system of a noble friend and patron. But as for the system itself when it was professed by vulgar infidels about town, authors whose writings were of no account, men who were not in fashionable society, his interest in it abated. Pope was not especially deferential to such as they were. On the contrary, he ranked them among the dunces and fools and poured his contempt upon their miserable heads.

"His can't be wrong whose life is in the right." Whose life will you take as your standard? Bolingbroke was no saint, though rich enough to afford to be good. I am thinking now of one of the grandest men that this continent has produced; a man who went from among us four years ago; a man of unusual grandeur and stateliness of character; a monumental man; heroic, and after a fashion, saintly; a man whom future men will probably think more highly of than living men do. In his early manhood he left prospects, wealth, the splendor of a successful career which was offered to him, troops of friends, the charm of society, all that the world calls precious, left it all, left it without a murmur, never was heard to complain of the sacrifice, and, gave himself with all the strength of his intellect, with all the massiveness of his will, with all the consecretion of his character to the cause which, in his generation, was considered the meanest, the ignoblest, the least dignified and reputable of any that invited sympathy; left great friends, who cut him in the street, passed by on the other side when they saw him coming, and, for thirty years, never faltered, never blanched, when the demand for heroism was made upon him. The steadfastness of his principle in evil times made him an outcast from his country and compelled him to drag a wretched painful body from land to land. Blows fell

on his naked head. He stood under the dripping scorn of the Scribes and Pharisees of his generation. This man I never think of without feeling that I stand in the presence of one of the human immortals. Shall we take him as our normal character? But men said of him, and say of him now, and will always say of him, that he was unsympathetic, unemotional, cold, that he lacked imagination, tenderness and force of feeling, that he was exclusive and overbearing and tyrannical in the assertion of his ethical principles. Men who knew him well, said that he rode on a splendid charger like a peerless knight, unhorsing the foe, but trampling under foot those whom he should have respected and spared. It was objected to him that his criticism was unsparing, that his feelings were ungenerous. If these judgments are true, we have not the consent even of his own generation to the authority of this type of character. The unsympathetic character is not the normal one. The man of conscience must also be a man of heart. Whose life shall you take? I think of another man, a friend of this last, yet so unlike him that they seemed to belong to different spheres; a man spacious, expansive, diffusive, fluent, glowing, human; one whose windows and doors stood ever open; a man of vast and spontaneous sympathy, forthputting, exuberant; a man of great wealth which

he distributed with both hands, in sums large and small; one who listened to every cry, whose eye detected the obscure form of suffering, whose heart actually went out in charity and beneficence towards the weak, the poor, the miserable, without regard to their personal or social condition. What shall we say of such a man as this? Was *his* life a life "in the right?" Is the philanthropist, the man of heart, the one from whom we can reason back from life to creed? At first blush it might seem so. But men said of him that he lacked judgment, that he was visionary, that he was carried away by his emotions, a sentimentalist; that his gifts hurt as many as they helped; that he beyond question meant to bless, but did his blessing so inconsiderately that the benediction ended in something like a curse.

Whose life is "in the right?" Take two private lives: I have spoken thus far of public characters—take two private lives. I have in mind a young man. He has right intentions, excellent purposes, a private character with which one cannot find fault. He has taste and talent, both educated. He has a business which he understands and in which he achieves distinction. He has friends many. He is popular among his companions, open-handed, open-hearted, an admirable youth of sterling qualities. But he is loose-ended careless, slipshod in his ways, improv-

ident of money and time, pulpy in the substance of his nature; he is unstable as water; cannot stand by principle; cannot adhere to the simple truth; cannot move straight on, but fluctuates, varies, goes this way, goes that way, is attractive at times, and yet has something about him which does not command respect. No, that life "is not in the right." Something is wanting.

I have in my mind another. He is very strict and conscientious, literal and prosaic; true to the letter; never will swerve by so much as a hair's breath from the exact line of veracity, sees with the utmost distinctness what is immediately before his vision, and follows it regardless of consequences. He is all conscience; but the conscience is individual, personal; it is conscience without the *con*, without the human connection, without sympathy, without consideration; conscience that does not take in what is due to other people but only what is due to himself; conscience without the *science*, because the determination of knowledge which the conscientiousness implies is a strict observance of the dictate of his own feeling, the expression of a single will. Narrow, therefore, extremely narrow; strong, penetrating, absolute, capable, in a sense, grand, still contracted and perverse. Is *that* life "in the right?" Is that the life from which one can safely infer a human creed? Not so. It is too exclusive, too lim-

ited, too personal, too individual. There is not enough sense of the relations which one sustains to all the rest.

"His can't be wrong whose life is in the right." Whose life we ask again? The Hebrews say the life of Moses; the Christians say the life of Jesus; the Hindoos say the life of Buddha; the Chinese say the life of Confucius. Which? It is confessed that there is no universal type of character. There is no person, however magnificently endowed, before whom the whole race kneels. We are but fragments. We are merely conjectures. The best are but studies in the perfect character, which is not national, but human, not of a race but of mankind.

Therefore, I repeat, it is all but hopeless, it is quite hopeless, in fact, to reason directly from conduct to creed, from character to belief. It is easier to reason the other way. They are not all graceless zealots who contend and earnestly contend, (not for mere modes of faith, not for empty forms and definitions of belief, but) for those strong ideas, for those immortal principles, for those steadfast convictions that take hold of the very roots of the mind. Most people, men and women, as we know them, are characterless; have no personal beliefs, have no vital creeds; but whenever you see a man or woman of genuine character, a man or woman whose life stands for something, be sure there lies a

creed behind the conduct; some view of man, some theory of life, present, past, future, some conception of the controlling forces of the moral world, some apprehension of the tendency of things, which sways the will though the man hardly suspects it; some deep conviction which lifts him up, sustains and consoles him, though he may not know from whence the strength or consolation comes.

Take the creed of Christendom, for example. It is very simple. The substance of the creed of Christendom may be described in a few words. The variations are numberless; the cardinal points are the same. The sects can be counted by the hundreds, but the fundamental ideas are few in number and distinctly marked:—that man is in a helpless degenerate condition, unable by the natural faculties to find the narrow way of truth, unable by the natural force of his heart to achieve goodness, unable by sheer determination of will to maintain justice,—a fallen demoralized being, hopeless, helpless, groveling on the earth which is his dungeon. Not a home, not a noble arena of conflict, not an observatory of knowledge, a temple of worship, but a waste and weary pilgrimage, in the course of which he must go timidly and warily, finding his way by light that comes only from above. A God—personal, individual, gives him direction in his wandering, places him under tutelage, educates him.

controls him, and by a long wearisome course of discipline, restores him at last to a felicity beyond the grave. A perfectly simple scheme of things, but how tremendously strong! how emphatic! It is plainly impossible that any rational creature should believe this, and not feel the force of it in every drop of his blood.

Now if we study Christianity deeply in the ages where the faith has prevailed, we find types of character corresponding to it that reflect all its lights and shadows, showing the grandeur and the loveliness, the gloom and the glory as the landscape repeats the changing moods of the skies. But what sort of life is it that answers to the christian creed? It is on the whole, an arrested life. The man who believes such a creed, must seldom smile save in sadness and compassion. He is devoted, firm, resolute. Feeling himself to be a person whose place is divinely appointed, whose work is providentially set, he goes through the world like a spy through a hostile camp, in disguise, looking neither to the right nor to the left, keeping himself well under control, not allowing his eye to wander or his thought to swerve. Pleasure he despises, amusement is his scorn. Luxury? comfort? these are of the evil one. Such work as God bids him to do, building, buying, selling, trading, learning—what not? he will do with a grim determination, without play, without elasticity

of feeling, without sense of its being anything else than a divine discipline. He will do it as a thing he is required to do. Not for the benefit of mankind, not as a contribution to the welfare of the world, but as a penance laid upon him, a worm of the dust, to fill his little place and discharge the duties of his short hour, until his place shall be vacant by his death and his hour be ended. This man is comparatively indifferent to what is called Truth. He cares little or nothing about art, disregards science, is careless of literature. The one book that he studies, studies on his knees, prays over, weeps over, is the bible,—the word of God.

That is his guide. That contains all that is essential for a rational and immortal being to know. That throws the light upon his faith; that keeps before him the promise of salvation. He will give money to send it abroad, contributing of his substance to foreign and home missionary enterprises, snatching souls from perdition, and defeating the wiles of Satan. He will give his full share into the treasuries of charitable institutions to relieve poverty and suffering, to alleviate the temporal lot of mankind, but his charity is not of the heart; it is not born of natural sympathy. It does not flow from a full fountain of affection. It is rather the charity that is appointed and inculcated by the gospel. It is enjoined, decreed by divine texts.

It looks to the spiritualizing of man, to the saving of his soul, to the rescue of the lost from hell. It is a means of grace to the giver, and an aid of faith to the receiver. The temporal lot of mankind is on this plan, of secondary importance. What matters it whether men are a little richer or a little poorer, externally more or less comfortable, socially more or less privileged, when, in a few years at the most, it must all be over, and the everlasting ages remain for the enjoyment of heaven?

This type of character which we have seen illustrated over and over again in every section of Christendom, among Catholics, among Protestants, among Protestants of every name, this type of character, peculiar, strong, clean-cut, corresponds closely with the severe uncompromising creed which has been preached for nearly two thousand years.

Now, take the opposite creed, the creed that I humbly try to explain and interpret from Sunday to Sunday in this place,—the creed of evolution. The *opposite* Creed I say,—for it proceeds from a different beginning, looks towards a different end, continues over a different course. The substance of this creed may also be expressed in a few words. In the detail of interpretation it allows of great differences; but the substance is perfectly simple, and it is this, that an unknown and un-

searchable force lying behind creation projects and impels it; that the course of things has been from the lowest rudimental beginning, onward and upward to the present point of attainment; that the march of progress is destined to pass beyond this point to unimaginable splendors. The world man lives in is growing,—is a-making, improves from year to year,—ay, from day to day, and the race of man is creating it. Man is the living creator; man is the actual caretaker; man is the immediate practical providence. In this scheme the historical movement of the world depends not upon a personal individual will outside the world, that controls the mechanism and touches the springs, but upon the organized force of humanity which drives the wheels.

Now, what sort of a character is it likely to be that is based upon a creed like this? Exactly the opposite in most cardinal respects from that which is typical of Christendom. In the first place, the holder of this creed is not, cannot be an ascetic. He is not grim, austere, or uncheerful. He does not skulk or cower through existence. He walks through it like a man with erect form. He believes in himself and in the varieties and potencies of selfhood. He cannot persuade himself that one particular type of will, sentiment, or disposition is noble or precious, but is certain that all types have

their place and their function. The artist, the architect, the merchant, the financier, the inventor, men of all trades, men of all pursuits and talents, men of every variety of temperament and every species of gift, are equally required to carry on the work of society. Therefore there is no contempt, no spirit of detraction or depreciation, but a large and generous sympathy with human suffering and endeavor, an attempt to understand opinions and faiths, to take systems at their best, to allow for every measure and species of force that each can throw. This man is perpetually insecure about the final and absolute truth. He is not one of the "graceless zealots" who "fight for modes of faith," but he is one of the earnest people who contend with all their weight for the principles of faith. He wishes to know more from day to day, to cast off prejudice, to correct ignorance, to mend his creed. He believes in having a better creed in detail the day after to-morrow than he has to-day. The substance of it always remains the same. Therefore he reads, studies and endeavors to learn what reasonable men have to say, what the philosophic men have to say, what the men of affairs have to say, gathering in whatever may enrich his mind, increase his power, become tributary to the streams of motive which bear him on, aiming to become acquainted with the best thoughts of

the best men on the most important subjects. Such a man instead of being the devotee of a particular system, instead of being wedded to a special creed or dogma, keeps his mind open and hospitable to different forms of truth.

As regards his charity, it is simply human. His interest being in the conditions of this life, in the estate of this world, in the culture and advancement of living people, in the problems which the age submits, in the laws of character, and the conditions of society, he devotes himself to these. His interest is in the working out of problems in which the men of his generation have much at stake, problems which require the largest intellectual view, the farest play of reason, and also the undistracted activity of the various moral forces. He looks to a future, but it is a future for humanity in this world,—in a future that is to result in some measure from the spirit of his own life and the power of his own achievement.

With this purpose before him he reverses some of the cardinal principles of the old faith. That preaches content; this preaches discontent. That enjoins submission; this inculcates effort. That recommends reliance on superhuman powers; this urges reliance on human resources. That lays emphasis on resignation to the will of heaven; this exalts energy, determination, fortitude, resolu-

tion. That praises contrition; this encourages revolt. That admonishes that man can do nothing, that God must do all; this never tires of repeating that man must do everything, that God, except through man, does nothing. On the intermediate, practical plane, the two systems correspond. They both countenance honesty. The believers in both systems agree on the propriety of paying their debts, telling the truth, being faithful to their neighbors.

Both, too, though on different grounds and in different temper, applaud and celebrate the sentiments of humility, meekness, aspiration, which are the common possessions of all faiths, the common characteristics of all nobleness. There is a tender, touching aspect to the religion of evolution, and to the character which corresponds to it. The genius of the faith is sympathetic, compassionate, gentle, merciful. There is a place in it for Jesus, for Francis d'Assisi, for saints and sisters of charity. Who ever feels that his thought, will, character, deed has force in helping the world on, making it easier for somebody else to live, lightening somebody's else burden, lifting somebody's else cross; who ever can feel this and not have a fund of inspiration pouring into his heart strong enough to lift him out of his stupidity and sloth, and make him resolute to do his best, be it much or little, be

it with hand, or heart, or will, be it with pen or sword, be it with the glistening tear of pity, with the smiling face of encouragement or the gentle voice of hope? No one can feel this responsibility without feeling quickened with motive to meet it, at least wishing it were in his power to be a helper. Such a wish will be father to a thought, the thought will result in endeavor, and the endeavor will succeed. The seeds of a new character, the germs of a new life will be planted. The cry of sorrow, the call of valor, the complaint of suffering, the moan of loneliness and pain, the wail of agony from the breaking heart come with fearful distinctness to his ear. If they do not touch his heart, then no strain from a mythological heaven will ever do it.

Yes, if one considers how his indolence, carelessness, waywardness, his waste of time, squandering of opportunities may depress the springs of hope, and withdraw force from the general will that bears the race onward, make it harder to answer life's question, harder to solve life's problem, harder for suffocating creatures to draw the breath of happiness, the reflection must awaken feelings akin to penitence and remorse, feelings of sorrow and regret deepening into contrition that he should be among the faithless when there is so much need of fidelity. Is not life worth living for one who can believe that he lives in a world organized as we know this world

of ours to be, with the quenchless stars illuminating his night heavens, the unceasing and unswerving sun inviting daily to new fields of existence, the height and glory and stupendous majesty of the world in full view from year to year, the unspent and undiminished powers of vitality, pressing into every atom of matter and mind? Is it not worth while to be in a world where there are endless questions to be asked and answered, endless problems waiting for solution, where there is nobody who does not need something that we can give, and the greatest are indebted to the smallest for some inestimable gift? Where, to the prophets of light and life and immortality the common toiler gives the sustenance of bread? the life of the body for the life of the soul? Is it not something to feel that when we have done all our utmost and laid ourselves down to our quiet sleep, the everlasting forces will still go on, making the world more and more beautiful and the lot of man happier and happier as they near the final consumation to which we have added our little trifle of help?

"His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

Let those who entertain a creed so magnificent as this try to live up to it, make a point of basing their life upon it, and the lives that have been so hackneyed and tiresome will once more blaze with light, and we shall find that it is not a difficult thing

any more to reason back and forth from noblest life to noblest belief, from noblest belief to noblest life.

THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.

The subject of discussion this morning is the inspiration of the scriptures. I do not venture upon any definition of the doctrine, for no definition that I or any other could make would be satisfactory to the evangelical world. The state of orthodox opinion by this time has become so uncertain that no statement of any cardinal dogma satisfies the great number of people.

The Scripture is commonly called the "Word of God," but how much is included in the phrase "word of God" is left to individual interpretation. The language of the great creeds, however warm and earnest, is still loose and vague; left so purposely for the interpretation of those who deal with the explanation of the creeds. The people generally, in Protestant churches, interpret the doctrine with great literalness and exactness, and understand by the inspiration of the bible, its complete

inspiration; not only the divine perfection of every religious sentiment, but the superhuman character of every thought, of every statement of opinion.

The doctrine commonly preached in evangelical churches is the doctrine of literal inspiration. This doctrine, it is fair to say, is abandoned by the best thinkers and scholars, even of the "orthodox" persuasion. There are many men in the pulpit and out of the pulpit in evangelical churches, who make large deduction from the popular faith; who qualify greatly and essentially the doctrine that obtains in the orthodox community; though on the other hand, there are distinguished scholars that hold the belief in inspiration so austerely and closely that it cannot be defended on critical grounds. The doctrine as held by the wisest of the popular teachers, amounts in substance to this, that the scriptures are inspired, not in regard to the truths of science, of intellectual philosophy, of astronomy or history, but solely in regard to those truths that pertain to the salvation of the soul, truths, that is, in the moral and spiritual order. But even thus narrowly construed, the doctrine seems a strange one, and must strike an unprejudiced mind as being singular, in view of certain obvious facts.

In the first place, it probably never would occur to the unsophisticated mind that so large a collection of books could be inspired. The books of the

old testament number thirty-nine. The books of the new testament number twenty-seven, sixty-six in all. Is it quite credible that so large a collection of writings, covering so large a space of time and such extensive areas of thought, should be, not merely dominated by a particular type of doctrine, not simply pervaded by a single thread of opinion, but animated by the same tone of sentiment, characterized by the same cast of conviction, saturated with a common feeling of hope and veneration from first to last? The Atlantic cable runs from Europe to America along the bed of the ocean; but it is carefully protected from abrasion against the rocks, annoyance from the beasts that inhabit the deep, and corrosion from the rust, in order that the slightest whisper may pass from continent to continent undisturbed. But can we suppose that the breathed whispers of the holy ghost have run through the spaces of two thousand years undisturbed by the currents of time, unaffected by jarring thoughts and wild disputations of the intellectual ocean through which the voice has passed? Is not probability overwhelmingly against such a belief?

Consider again how long a time it has taken to form the collection of books which we call the scriptures. A thousand years, at the shortest computation, were required to produce the books of the old testament. Fifteen hundred years were

necessary to complete the collection of the new testament. The task of selection and arrangement was performed under the greatest difficulties, hesitatingly, doubtfully, without the help of trained criticism, amid much misgiving and sharp controversy. Books were let in, books were thrown out apparently without critical or philosophical reason. For one hundred and fifty years there was no new testament whatever. There was no collection of Christian writings as distinct from Jewish, until several hundred years after the birth of Christ had elapsed. Can we believe that books thus collected, thus precariously preserved and loosely grouped, thus left apparently at the mercy of ignorance, dogmatism, partisanship, sectarian jealousy, passion, were dictated by the holy spirit, were pervaded by it, controlled by it so as to communicate nothing but truth? The supposition is, on the face of it, astounding.

Consider again that this dogma of the inspiration of the bible was one of the very last to be adopted by the church. The earliest controversies turned on the points of evangelical doctrine connected with the scheme of redemption, Trinity, the Christ, the depravity of man, the issues of the hereafter. The decree pronouncing the scripture inspired, came when every other dogma had been disposed of. Did the holy spirit wait all this time before it

sealed and authenticated the records of its own revelation? Are we to receive on credit, as published by authority of the eternal mind, documents which the human mind allowed to rest in uncertainty, to lie in obscurity, to remain in doubt, for fifteen hundred years?

Consider again that in the narrowest interpretation of the doctrine of the inspiration of the bible, we are met with insuperable difficulties. Even on moral and religious themes, the bible is not in accord with itself. There is no consent of doctrine; there is no sympathy of sentiment; there is no uniform law or promise or gospel. Are we to believe that the writer of Proverbs was inspired when he advised to "give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts?" Does God bid man to "drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more?" Are we to suppose that Moses and Samuel were inspired when they pronounced their harsh decrees against backsliders and recusants, called down the judgments of heaven upon malcontents, and even smote the people by thousands with the sword? Are we to believe that the author of the book of Ecclesiastes was inspired when he insinuated doubts against the immortality of the soul? Is every dogma in regard to nature and the attributes of providence and of God to be accepted as inspired,

although it be radically inconsistent with reason, and irreconcilable with fundamental ideas of faith?

It can be shown that the idea of God underwent changes, and passed through a series of intellectual transformations in the mental growth of the Jewish people; and these changes are plainly recorded in the bible. If the Holy Spirit dictated the changes, it must have animated the mind from whose activity they proceeded. It guarantees then the law of development. Before we can accept the inspiration of the Scripture on the ground that the moral and religious ideas contained therein are implanted or warranted by the holy ghost, we must meet difficulties more formidable than any in criticism.

It is useless, in my judgment, to argue against a belief so strange, so irrational as that of the inspiration of the bible. It is not matter for argument. All the evidence is on the side of the opposition. Taking the question on its literary merits, there is little or nothing to be said in defense of the inspiration of the scriptures. Instead, therefore, of debating for or against the dogma, let me undertake to tell, if I can, how such a strange dogma arose in the beginning. How did men ever come to believe that this collection of writings was of superhuman origin? How did such a persuasion gain currency in the church? It certainly was not on account of the literary excellence of any portion of the bible,

because its literary excellence has never been widely appreciated, and is not yet exalted as a primary characteristic. It is not on account of the peculiarity of the moral teaching in the bible, for maxims as noble, as lofty, as pure, are found in other and older scriptures belonging to nations of a different stock. It is not on account of the sublimity of the religious conceptions in the bible, for conceptions quite as majestic are to be found among sages and prophets of the Hindoo and the Persian race, who delivered their oracles of wisdom before the richest portions of the old testament were written.

The dogma was created for a purpose, and was deliberately imposed upon mankind. It was started for popular effect. It was built up, inculcated, established for motives of policy. It is not difficult to vindicate this position. It happened in this wise. When the second detachment of Jews were sent by orders of King Xerxes to Jerusalem to reinstate the Hebrew civilization there, it was doubtless for political purposes. In order that the Persian king might have in that particular part of his Empire a bulwark against the enemies of the kingdom to the north, and the enemies of the kingdom at the south, he deputed Ezra the scribe, a man of great learning, high reputation and burning zeal, to lead the company of returning exiles back to the old sites to restore the ancient state. He went, bear-

ing letters of plenary authority from the king, fortified with an abundant treasury, and backed by the support of the vast oriental monarchy behind him. He went with about eleven hundred families, the best of the Jews in Babylon. His purpose was avowedly, to restore the Hebrew state, to rebuild Jerusalem. With this understanding so much power was committed to him. He was a man of purpose, full of the Hebrew spirit; a new vision of prosperity and glory for his people shone upon his mind. The first thing he did on his arrival and recognition was to separate the true Jews from the hostile and indifferent; to gather together in close confederacy those who were faithful in their allegiance to the Hebrew traditions and institutions. His policy was exclusive, narrow, austere, in a sense, despotic. Such of the Jewish residents in Palestine as had formed connections by marriage with the heathen people lying about them, were forbidden, in the name of the Lord, to maintain such connection; and such was his influence, through the powers bestowed on him by the Persian monarch, the sufficiency of his wealth and the moral sway of his conviction, that he succeeded in compelling the greater number of the Jews on the soil of Palestine to put away their wives. Fanaticism justified the policy. Misery followed of course. The deed was arbitrary in conception and cruel in execution. It

provoked fierce resentment, but it was necessary for the inauguration of a national policy; it was necessary to the revival of the Jewish state, which Ezra had undertaken.

This occurred five hundred years, we will say, before the coming of the Christ. To support his policy, to carry out his work, to complete his plans, Ezra collected such fragments of Hebrew literature as already existed and served his purpose, and published what was called the Law; this collection he caused to be read, under the most solemn auspices, to the assembled people, day after day, through the whole of a festival time. The tradition was started that this collection had been miraculously formed; that a supernatural guidance had directed, a supernatural authority sealed the work.

Ezra passed away. A generation succeeded of discord, doubt and disintegration. About thirty years later Nehemiah was sent, a Jew, of Susa, a man of patriotic zeal, of high standing and reputation in the Persian court. He followed in the footsteps of Ezra, and with a narrower purpose, a more austere will. He was a harsh, self-righteous man, according to his own account. In the so-called book of Nehemiah one may read all about him, how he pursued the same policy that his predecessor had adopted; how he too demanded that the foreign wives should be put away, that the Sabbath should

be kept holy, that all the Jewish festivals should be observed; how he continued the practice of Ezra by consecrating and enlarging the collection of scripture, and setting it up as a main pillar of the Hebrew state.

The bible was not formed in the interest of universalism, but in the interest of ecclesiasticism. The prophetic spirit was gone. The fervor, the impulse of the Hebrew people had died out. Nothing remained but policy, art, statemanship. The priestly temper had become supreme. To rebuild the temple, to reinstate the church, to re-establish the hierarchy, to raise a bulwark against heresy, disbelief, disorder, criticism, backsliding, was the aim of these two men. It was accomplished, for better or worse.

The corner-stone of Scripture was laid. No pains were spared to surround the collection of sacred writings with all the grandeur that imagination, fancy, tradition could gather upon it. Strange stories were told of the interference of the holy spirit in bringing the writings together and authenticating them; stories long ago pronounced fables. The fact seems to be that some writings were admitted because they were supposed to have been written by holy men; others because their contents were sacred; others because they countenanced the policy of Ezra and Nehemiah. At all events, before the time of Christ's coming, the old testament col-

lection was substantially finished and closed. Not altogether closed, because other books might have been admitted; other books were, in fact, admitted; but as far as it went, the collection had the reputation of being given and guaranteed by the inspiration of the Lord. It was called the Law. So much for the old testament. The inspiration of the old testament scripture was deliberately planned, arranged, determined upon, instituted for the protection of the Hebrew state.

How was it in regard to the new testament? The Christians were Jews by race and tradition. They observed the Jewish customs and ceremonies; they practiced the Jewish rites; they recited the Jewish litanies. For a century and a half after the death of Jesus the only Bible in use among Christians was the old testament, and no attempt was made to form any other. Gradually the writings of Paul, along with other popular pieces of various stamp, were brought in. Local collections were formed. They grew with additions. To keep heresy at bay, to protect the germinating orthodox tradition, scholars worked; consultations were held; but no attempt was made to authenticate a collection of writings which would stand as Christian scriptures, occupying the same relations towards Christian that the Hebrew writings did towards the Jewish faith, until the reign of the Emperor Constantine, in the year 332.

Now observe; Constantine undertook exactly the work that Ezra and Nehemiah took in hand, as agents for the Persian monarch. He was building up an empire. He was restoring a state. He was organizing a policy. Constantine was a shrewd, wily, long-sighted, unscrupulous man. He knew well that a state without a church, a church without a priesthood, a priesthood without a collection of scriptures, were things unheard of. He, therefore, *in the interest of his policy*, a purely worldly policy, issued orders for the formation of a collection of scriptures. A collection was made. The effort came to no result. The task was formidable, and there was no tribunal of judgment. Generations passed away, and nothing more was done. The middle ages elapsed and made no contribution of importance to the work.

It was in the fifth century that the council of Carthage undertook, in the interest of a consolidating orthodoxy, to bring the divided portions of the church together. As part of the scheme, the council made another attempt to establish the canon of scriptures, and failed. Not until the council of Trent—the famous council of Trent—the most famous council in the whole order of church history, which was held in the year 1545, was the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible pronounced upon.

And why was the council of Trent held? *To establish the unity of the church!* to raise a bulwark against Protestantism. The church was disintegrated. The Catholic dogmas were falling to pieces. The Protestant heresy was spreading. The spirit of rebellion was creeping in at all points, and it was absolutely necessary that a great effort should be made to stem the torrent of unbelief. And the first declaration of the sanctity and inspiration of the Bible was made by this council, as late as the middle of the sixteenth century. And again, let it be repeated, for the purpose, the deliberately avowed purpose, of shoring up the tottering walls of Catholic Christendom. No argument was given; no critical reasons were assigned. The doctors who presided at the council of Trent, did not undertake to say on what outward or inward evidence the scriptures should be considered inspired. It was necessary for the salvation of the church that they should be so declared, and they were so declared. Popular consent was the umpire.

Then we come to Protestantism. It was a prime necessity for the Protestant churches that they should have a basis, a foundation, a creed, an authority to appeal to. They had discarded the Church. They had disavowed the Councils. They flouted the authority of the Pope. The Council of Trent was nothing to them. They must have a

substitute in place of the hierarchy. They set up the Bible ; in order to give a solid impregnable adamantine basis of unity for the Protestant confession, they planted themselves upon the Bible, asserting its inspiration with more emphasis and determination than ever.

Martin Luther was absorbingly interested in his doctrine of justification by faith. His idea was that the essential truths of salvation were to be comprehended at once and immediately by the human soul, and he therefore pronounced upon the scriptures, judging them by the "analogy of faith." The human soul above the scripture! This would not do. The reformed Protestants led by John Calvin made a more systematic study, and gave a more scientific interpretation of the Bible, always in the interest of the faith, always with an eye to unity of the Church; not rationally defending its inspiration, not justifying the dogma by evidence, but laying such basis as was necessary to build a Church upon. Calvin was reasonable. His successors were not. The most extravagant ideas of the inspiration of the bible were set on foot by the followers of those very men, who were supposed to have advocated the principle with free inquiry. They did nothing of the kind. It is a mistake to identify the Protestant principle with free inquiry. The authority of the bible *over the mind* was the Protest-

ant idea. The Protestants laid down the doctrine of the inspiration of the bible in terms stronger, more absolute, more narrow and literal than had ever been stated before, and they maintained the doctrine with a stubbornness of will that had never before been illustrated. Not merely the sentiments and thoughts of the bible, but its very letters, nay its vowel points even were considered inspired; so firmly set were the opinions of the early Protestants upon this most literal form of inspiration, that no crack or crevice was left open for doubt, misgiving, or inquiry. The bible was closed against investigation. Science, history, philosophy, must all stand aloof. The bible was regarded as a divine production, not as a book, emanating, in the course of literature, from the human mind. There was not a human element in it. The human reason must submit to its test.

Little by little, very little by very little, the critical spirit succeeded in breaking into the sacred enclosure. Scholars came to know something, students of literature asked questions, persisted in asking questions, until now, we have extorted the admission from intelligent Christian men, that the inspiration of the bible is limited to the inspiration of its spiritual ideas.

By this mere outline sketch which lack of room forbids extending, one may see clearly enough how

it came to pass that the inspiration of the bible was accepted as a belief; one may see clearly how it follows that the doctrine is to be accepted, not on intelligent or spiritual grounds, but simply on the grounds of ecclesiastical tradition and authority.

Now let us look at the consequences that accompany the doctrine. These consequences are to my mind most disastrous. The doctrine of the inspiration of the scriptures has in my judgment stood and does still stand in the way of the progress of the human mind, in the regulation of its most vital concerns. Let us suppose, if we can, that some person who has never heard of the doctrine of the inspiration of the bible were to take it up and read it like any other book; a youth with unprejudiced mind, with untrammeled intellect. There is a fascination about the old book. The stories of wonder and miracle, the beautiful legends, the lively narratives, the exquisite touches of nature, the glorious songs, the strange vicissitudes of the Hebrew people, the bits of biography, the sketches of character, the marvellous phenomena in heaven and in earth, the visitation of angels, the chronicles of judgment, all these engage the mind. The enchanted reader goes from passage to passage. All at once he is reminded that he must not read this book like any other, that he must put his mind aside, that his critical taste has nothing to do with the

composition; that it is not a human book; that the poetry is not poetry, that the songs are not songs, that the history is not history, that the thoughts never came from the human mind, but from the divine mind; that never out of a passionate heart broke the expressions of feeling; that the lovely sentiments, the sweet strains of poetry are dogmas in disguise; opinions sugared over with poetic association! What confusion; what embarrassment; what dismay must fall upon such a mind! All its criteria for ascertaining truth are thrown to the winds. The judgment, the power of discrimination, the desire to understand all count for nothing. One may not ask a question; may not criticise; may not contrast or compare; may not find fault; may not detect discrepancies. The book is all one, must be reconciled as one; the old testament living in the new, the new testament living in the old; Moses must be the companion of Jesus; Jesus must be visible in the lamb slain by bloody priests on the old Hebrew altars. The frenzied prophet battling with the ills and consoling the anguish of his time, must be supposed to have an eye towards the occurrences of some distant future; and the description of an individual wholly engaged in the struggles of his own age, must be supposed to forcast in some mysterious way, the fortunes and fate of the unborn Christ. Prophecy, psalm, chronicle,

legend, dogma, proverb, are all mixed up together; all are made to bear one stamp of mind, heart and conviction. What we call intelligence is no more possible. The human mind is blotted out; reason stands aghast. There is no such thing as reason; every rational principle is violated. Consider the torture, supposing the reader to be sincere, thoughtful, earnest, that such a mind must undergo in attempting to unread, to understand the contents of the book. Such benumbing paralyzing effect, the doctrine of the inspiration of the scriptures exerts upon thousands of minds, reversing all the standards of judgment; so much so, that it is reckoned a kind of sacrilege to call the poetry of the old testament beautiful; to ascribe human emotion to the prophets' speech, to explain symbolical language figuratively, to throw the least surmise or shadow of suspicion upon passages that record the most surprising and naturally incredible transactions; so much so, that earnest men with enlightened minds have laid their learning and enlightenment altogether aside, have become little children, simpler than children, as they have read this book, which requires more knowledge to understand, more insight, more wisdom, than any book in the English tongue.

I object again to the doctrine of the inspiration of the scriptures that it lays a false basis for natural truth. Where shall the geologist learn anything

about the construction of the earth? From texts in Genesis? a book written, nobody knows by whom? a book full of legends and myths? He must go to the earth itself, turn over its stony leaves one by one, and painfully learn to read the record which the finger of the Creator has written there. How shall the astronomer know anything about the stars? By going to ancient texts which were written before the structure of modern science was commenced? He goes to the stars themselves, falls back upon his mathematics, consults his calculus, uses his latest invented instruments, and builds up his knowledge on scientific grounds. How shall we learn what is right and what is wrong? By studying society; by observing how things work; by comprehending the conditions of happiness, the circumstances that favor progress; by putting facts together; by referring to the freshest records of conscience and comparing the most accurate data of experience. Would you go back to a book written two thousand or three thousand years ago to know how you should treat your neighbor, when your neighbor is by your side and you can look him in the eye, understanding what he thinks and what he needs, what is your duty and what is his responsibility? How shall we know about providence? By studying the world which is the field of providence, getting on the track of law, ascertaining

the conditions of happy life, measuring the workings of moral cause and effect, noting how one state leads inevitably to another. Rest there. Do not pore over texts which you cannot understand. Live to-day wisely is the maxim, the decree of faith as well as of science. Reason, not recollection, is the organ of truth.

I maintain, therefore, that scripture in giving a basis for ethical ideas independent of experience, simply undermines the foundation of knowledge, pulls down the structure of rational faith, makes it in fact, impossible to build an enduring structure. We see the disastrous effect of this, when we come to questions of conscience. It is not too much to say that no single enormity has gone unjustified by scripture. Slavery, war, polygamy, the institutions that human society has been agonizing to put away, spending tears of blood to abolish, have been bolstered up by divine authority, barricaded against assault by scripture texts. Bitterly can some of us look back to the time when anti-slavery men had to fight against scripture as being their worst opponent. Well do I recollect how a living and eminent divine, who has within a few weeks been protesting against a close identification of scripture in its obvious teachings with exploded dogmas in science,—well can I recollect the time when that very man cited scripture texts to give warrant to

the institution of slavery. The times have changed, and the exigencies of faith have changed with them.

The Mormon appeals to the bible for his outworn institution of polygamy. The advocate of the gallows appeals to the bible for his institution of the gibbet. Capital punishment may be right or wrong; I do not say that it is expedient or inexpedient: I do not undertake to say whether it be brutalizing or civilizing in its effect. The question is open; but to cite an ancient text from Genesis in its favor is certainly no argument; rather it is an offense against reason and conscience. Let the question be decided on rational grounds as a question in social economy. To decide it upon scripture grounds is to the last degree irrational.

Thus the great company of reformers, whatever they aim at, are brought up against the adamantine wall of scripture, are bidden to meet an invisible foe, to overthrow a spectre or else yield their whole case. The enormity of this was early perceived by honest men. As far back as the third century, one of the most eminent fathers of the church, an eloquent preacher, a learned scholar, declared that to adhere to the literal text of the bible was to incur the danger of unreasonableness.

Is it not so? To ascertain how men should deal with each other in the actual circumstances of life,

—is not that the most important thing to discover? To know how to be true and just, to be charitable and kind; to decide what existing relations imply and impose,—is not that the one thing needful for us? Are not our scientific men, our philosophers, our social reformers straining their minds to the utmost to reconstruct society upon rational principles?—to find out how and when people should marry, how families should be reared, how children should be instructed, how schools should be organized, how states should be built up, how public affairs should be conducted? To get at the secret of social existence is more than the wisest and best of men have succeeded in doing. But their efforts would have been more richly rewarded had they not been confronted by the letter of scripture, which assured them that all this was settled by divine decree thousands of years ago; that they are wasting time, thought and energy. Accordingly, all but the resolute give up the inquiry, go back to the bible and are quiescent. Some of the best minds and noblest hearts in Christendom are by this superstition taken from the number of diligent workers and consigned to inaction.

And yet it seems to me of first moment that we should believe in inspiration. But inspiration of what? What is the test of inspiration? *That is inspired which communicates inspiration.* That is in-

spired which inspires. Any scripture, sacred or secular, poetry or prose, writing, history, biography, fiction, work of imagination, of knowledge, of philosophy,—any scripture that inspires men to nobler, sweeter, purer, better lives, that warms the heart, widens the intelligence, enlightens the conscience, fortifies the will, quickens and expands the reason is inspired: call it bible if you will; call it what you will; let it be written by Plato, by Shakspeare, Newton, Bacon, Descartes, Schoperhauer, Hartmann; let it be written by some political economist of the latest school, by John Stuart Mill; let it be written by a scientist, Tyndal, Darwin or Huxley, by George Eliot, Dickens, Thackeray, Tennyson, Browning, Longfellow,—by man or woman of genius, dead or alive. if it communicates a spark of inspiration, if it nerves man or woman, boy or girl to more humane life and duty, it is inspired scripture. By this test the old bible must abide or it will go down.

What, finally, is the source of inspiration?—what but the human reason, the highest attainment in literature, art, poetry, philosophy, the sum of acquired intelligence finding expression in articulate form of speech, enlightening the open mind, subduing manners, lifting people out of barbarism and beastliness into some distinct consciousness of their humanity. This human reason out of which all

literature has proceeded, which has written all the books dictated since time began, form, guarantee and consecrate all the scripture's holy texts.

This supreme reason, the reason of man, only the wisest have sounded its depths. The holiest have not all of it. The sages grope in its recesses, yet it is accessible to the humblest.

"The white wings of the holy ghost
Stoop unseen o'er the heads of all."

It is the source of inspiration now and will be forever. Its light increases; the beam of its day comes duly and sends a thrill into the stony forms standing alone in the wilderness of time. By the light of this, men shall no longer walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. Even the weak mount up with wings like the eagles; they shall walk and not be weary, they shall run and not faint.

MORALS AND RELIGION.

A paragraph has lately been going the rounds of the papers taken from the writings of one of the most eminent literary men of England to the effect that a process of decay is going on in society in regard to the religious beliefs, traditions and institutions of Christendom, and that the process of decay is likely to be followed by results disastrous to human society. The man who expresses these opinions is understood to be, himself, a free thinker, a man of accomplishment and firmness of mind, and much boldness of thought; he cannot, therefore, be charged with the timidity which usually prompts such declarations. He is a philosopher, a student of history, a critic of human opinions; and, hence, it may be presumed that he is prepared for any of the ordinary changes that ensue in the course of human affairs and speculation. He is not frightened by bugbears; he is not deceived by illusions. He sees what so many see, that there is,

throughout modern society, an increasing disbelief in opinions heretofore unquestioned; an increasing disregard of institutions, a growing neglect of religious observances; and he foresees some of the inevitable results of changes so vast and revolutionary, running as they do through society, touching all classes of men, not a peculiarity of the cultivated few, but fast becoming the familiar property of the people, and among the intellectual orders a controlling force.

Precisely what results so disastrous Mr. Froude apprehends he does not specify; but throughout our communities we hear every day expressions of fear lest a decline of religious beliefs should be followed closely by a decline in the moral forces of veracity and of valor, of energy and of purity. As men lose their faith in an individual presence superintending daily life, whose providence administers all the affairs of men, whose eye is upon every individual's lot, it is apprehended that the sense of responsibility will decline; that there will be no longer an ever-present and all-sustaining sentiment of duty; that the very idea of a moral law will perish; that men flying off from their central attraction to goodness will lose themselves in all manner of deceitful vagaries. It is apprehended, commonly I think, that a disbelief in the dogma of hell will be followed by a disintegration in the moral sense of

the community. Damp down the fires of perdition, men say, and the zeal of conscience will cool. Having nothing to fear in the future, there will be no dread, no perception even of the transient evils of the present; a sensual philosophy will prevail, and men will indulge themselves at bidding of desire in the loose enjoyments of a low, mechanical or animal existence. It seems to be a common belief, that if the faith in a hereafter, in a personal, individual, responsible immortality, were weakened, there would all at once, be a relapse into the bestial condition, we have so slowly outgrown.

I cannot share such a fear and for reasons I am about to give. It seems to me to be too much forgotten that conduct depends upon its own laws; that morality follows its own rules of development, and comes or goes, is variable or permanent, according to the general compliance or non-compliance with the conditions of life that are appointed for each generation. Vast social movements going forward day after day, without choice or will or determination of special men, seem to be independent of the speculative changes that disintegrate systems of thought.

Looked at historically, it is not strictly true that morals and religion have invariably accompanied each other. On the contrary, there are facts which look the other way. Morality and religion are two

distinct and often incompatible spheres. The religions of Asia, of Africa, of the continents of North and South America have not acknowledged a close partnership with morality. Millions of Asiatics, Buddhists, Brahmins, Hindoos have never felt that morality was dependent or attendant on religion. The native tribes of Africa have never entertained such an idea. The original inhabitants of North America have never dreamed of such a thing. The notion would seem to be peculiar to a section of the human race. It comes to us directly from the Jews, the most conspicuous branch of what we call the Semitic races. It was fully recognized and adopted by the Hebrews, who were eminently a practical people, active, purposeful, executive, living in and for this world, setting high value on the good things of this life, a people who for ages of their national existence had no well-defined conception of a hereafter. All their ideas of Providence, of divine rule, referred to the conduct of life as it lay before them. The prayer of the pious Hebrew was that he might have a long life in this world. Fortune, happiness, abundance of children, wealth, position were signs of divine favor, in his eyes. Church and state in his view were one. Jehovah was the sovereign ruler. He made and executed laws. He prescribed customs for the state, the family, the individual. He presided over

the actual workings of mortal affairs. Jehovah was an administrator who demanded practical obedience. This intimate connection between things divine and things human, may without exaggeration be called a peculiarity of the people who gave origin to Christianity. They imparted their genius to the new faith. This particular idea of a close relation between morals and religion comes directly from them, and any divergence from it is due to influences that came in from another quarter, and changed the current of the primitive tradition. The infusion of the Asiatic and Greek spirit weakened the alliance. The Catholic church for reasons which history discloses, held fast to this notion that men must live up to their faith, and make their lives in some degree consistent with their religious beliefs. Protestantism did not discard the tradition, but transmitted it; thus it has come to pass that the faith has been passed along beyond the limits of the Semitic or Hebrew race, and has become the faith of modern Europe. In Western Europe it is now a conceded point that religion and morality must go hand in hand together. But in Eastern Europe it is not yet fully conceded, and outside of Europe it is not conceded at all. And the prejudice disappears from the mind of the modern world according to the rapidity with which rational or scientific morality supersedes ecclesiastical or traditional.

In proportion as ethics become established on natural foundations, as morals are built up upon a firm human basis and stand upon their own principles, they become independent of religion. The two spheres again become distinct from one another. Morality may even impose conditions upon religion constraining it to be reasonable. The deity must become just, the providence must be merciful, the hereafter must be rearranged; the dogma of hell is abolished as unworthy of just deities. In the centers of civilization, where civilization is civilized, where men that is, are civil, morality modifies and transforms faith, and will do so more and more.

Looking at the subject philosophically, we see that the divorce between religion and morals is effected by the necessity of the case. It is decreed. The object of religion—taking the interpretation of it by Christianity, Buddhism, Bramanism, or any of the old world faiths, is to reconcile men with God, not with each other. Morality aims to produce a perfect society; religion aims at building up the family in heaven. Morality aims at making men happy, sympathetic, just, kind; religion aims at making men safe in the hereafter. Morality would make men aware of their brotherhood, sensible of their social relations, alive to the demands of mutual obligation, strict and reasonable in the practice of duty and good

will one towards another; religion proposes to restore a broken bond between earth and heaven, to placate a God, get the good will of a supernatural being, propitiate the wrath of invisible powers, make it possible when this world is done, for the true believers, to occupy places of privilege in the kingdom of heaven. Morality contemplates the establishment of such reasonable, wholesome, hearty, friendly relations among men of all conditions and ages, as will make life desirable and insure steady improvement. Religion does not necessarily recognize this end. Its duty is accomplished when God is pleased. Its offering is the offering that pleases God. Its sacrifice is the sacrifice that propitiates God. Morality makes the citizen, religion the saint. Religion and morality therefore thus defined, have in view two entirely different objects. One may exist and flourish without the other, as each in fact does. We may suppose ecclesiastical observances abolished, yet morality would go on. We may suppose men to be immoral, cold, unsympathetic, unjust, cruel, vindictive, yet religion might thrive. The two are at war oftener than at peace. Millions of the human race, the ignorant, the degraded, the debased in manners, low in their whole conception of life, are abjectly devout, bend the knee before any power that makes the least claim on their adoration, bring their costliest offerings

and lay them upon an idolatrous altar, supplicate the priest for absolution in the belief that gifts will bribe the Supreme Power. As is the degradation, so is the devoutness. The postures are arranged by the terrors, and the terrors are great in proportion to the mental darkness. The minister of religion tells men what they must do, and pronounces the verdict on conduct.

Thus, while historically we see that morals and religion seldom have gone hand in hand together, looked at philosophically, we see how they never can be in close companionship. Taking the definition of religion that is entertained in the popular churches of New York this very day, it is simply impossible that rational morals and such a religion should go hand in hand together. They strain in different, at moments in opposite directions.

And now we are prepared to take the next step, and to say that on a rational view, morals come first, not merely in importance, but in logical order. The moral state of man, the cast of his sentiments and convictions determines his worship. We begin with morality, such as it is, for we feel before we think; we adore before we understand. Our gods reflect ourselves. All religions, when they are natural and simple—I mean before they are instituted,—are but a reflection of the moral state of the men who entertain them. They are gigantic

pictures on the clouds drawn by human hopes and fears. Views of God, the hereafter, the need and method of propitiation depend on the imagination, not on knowledge or judgment. Degraded people have degraded deities. People whose lives are low and mean have a hereafter that is low and mean. One can have no conception of a future that is not grounded on and colored by the moods and persuasions that exist in the present. As men are, such will be their divinities. They will worship nothing higher than they can conceive, and they will conceive nothing higher than what their conscience and heart dictate. It is simply impossible that a vacant mind, or an abject will, should worship a pure divinity. Call God what you choose, call him "Jehovah, Jove or Lord," Father in Heaven, Mother of souls, he will be to you the idol which your thoughts make him. You will transform him into the image of yourself.

Every form of religion, therefore, traced back to its source, is perceived to be a reflection, a projection out of themselves, a delineation upon the walls of the world, of the moods, temperaments, dispositions, states of feeling which nations of men have entertained. Primitive Christianity was a reflection of the normal condition of the Jews at the time when the religion started on its course. We are in the habit of considering Christianity as a dis-

tinct legacy to mankind, a new revelation, a sudden outbreak of glory, a fresh influx of life to the world. But as we search history, we find that even here every shade of color, every touch of light, every moral trait that the early religion exhibited was a literal reproduction of the state of feeling in which the people were living. What was that state of feeling? It reveals itself. Here was a race, with a remarkable history, with more remarkable expectations, calling itself the chosen race, believing itself to be the peculiar people of Jehovah, looking for an absolute triumph of its own faith, the supremacy of its religious institutions and policy over the habitable world, despising the vast Roman Empire as Pagan, counting the nations of the earth as dust in the balance, anticipating the day of judgment when its law should pronounce sentence on all Gentiles, Greek, Roman, barbarian, no matter how numerous, educated, proud in strength. When Jehovah should say the word and these should vanish like a dream, the chosen people would remain.

This was the expectation. Think of these people, poor, persecuted, oppressed, kept under the heel of the hated Roman empire, the heart seething with anguish, the conscience agonized with pain as they contemplate the gulf between the present degradation, the bitterness of humiliation and shame, and the dream of a splendor that might break any morning.

Then look at primitive Christianity, and see how it reflects every trait, every shade of expression, every phase of emotion. It shows exactly these hopes, these fears, these anticipations, these and no others. Jesus called himself the Messiah, whom all the people were hungering for; and those who followed him, clung to him, called themselves his disciples, were the poor, meek, sorrowing Jews who believed his claim, and were persuaded that the divine hour was about to strike, that the supreme moment, the judgment of the world was at the door. That is all there was in that first generation. The exaltation lasted for a few years, but threw its ray much further. When time proved the national expectation to be an enthusiastic dream, when the world went on in its inflexible course, and the Roman empire instead of vanishing away like a mist, grew in might more and more, the expectation changed its form. The kingdom of heaven no longer looked for on earth was transferred to the skies. The believer hoped to rise to it, instead of awaiting its descent to him. The disciple expected, at the resurrection, to float upwards to the place of his blessedness leaving terrestial misery behind. That is the chief characteristic difference between new testament Christianity and Judaism.

The Religion in its later historical form followed closely the primitive tradition of its founders. The

faith represented the morals of the world to which it went. How was it with the Roman Catholic church? This Church,—for fifteen hundred years, the greatest religion on the face of the globe, the most compact, the most splendid, the most completely organized,—was yet but a reflection of the moral condition of the society in which it was planted. It was and is the *church of Rome*,—of Rome, the imperial city—the mistress of the world,—the city whose majestic peace massive and stately settled down upon the civilized globe. Hers was a name representative of stable power, of law, of organization; a name for all that was tremendous in will, sweeping in rule; it stood for an imperialism. Rome was the city of the earth, the eternal city. Christianity has its seat there; and Christianity, observe, takes on the attributes of the city where it was planted and first established. It is the church of Rome, a state church, a consecrated dominion; simply the old empire with the name of Christ given to it. In spirit it was imperial, though it appealed for its authority to the meek Nazarene. The peculiarity of the Roman church is the peculiarity of the Roman empire. Its interest in intelligence was small; its concern for dogma was immense. Its creed was loose; its claim to authority was absolute. It never cared much for theological niceties. It never encouraged philosophy, as

such, or countenanced subtle disputations. It was and is an administration. It was and is a dominion, a power, a state. It has its king, its subordinate officers, its fixed law and statute. It has its hierarchy of titled priests, its altars, its sacramental rites and symbols. These are the tests. The private individual may think as he will as long as he does not proclaim his thought. For the church of Rome cares supremely about order. No sage or philosopher, Galileo or Bruno, no saintly Savonarola may disturb the appointed order. The church allows an indefinite liberty of opinion so long as the policy is unbroken. Thus, when the catholic church undertook to define and settle the canon of scripture, it followed the rule of prescription. Instead of proceeding scientifically, by critical means, to discover what books of scripture might be genuine, what were authentic, it called for a popular vote. It took the public consent. It was an affair of statesmanship. The council of Trent accepted and ratified the books that everybody read. That was scripture that was received as scripture. The church does not care to go behind the actual fact. Those were the books that custom, observation, general habit and association confirmed as edifying. The Roman church believes in ethics, in morals, in systematic arrangement of duties, encouraging people to walk steadily in the beaten track,

to march uncomplainingly along the highway.

Take another illustration of the idea that religion follows ethics. The end of the 10th century was one of those astonishing crises in history from which creeds and institutions date their birth. It signalized the expiration of the thousand years which, according to prophecy, were to close the career of the world. It was the period when the coming of Christ was to be looked for—the day of judgment. It was an awful crisis. As we get into the history of it the horrors multiply, the agony increases; it seems to us as if existence must have been almost intolerable to any class of men. Ignorance unbounded, poverty unmitigated, crime stalking through the streets, huge plagues and pestilences sweeping over continents carrying people away by the tens of thousands; no schools, no knowledge, no intelligence, the lower classes trodden down pitilessly, the upper classes reckless, savage, luxurious, bloodthirsty; a spirit of fear haunting men, an abject terror pervading all Christendom. The populations with blanched faces fall on their knees, listening for the sound of the awful trumpet which is to announce the end of the world predicted by the seer of the apocalypse. Then was revived, out of this suspense and horror, this sense of hopelessness, and helplessness, that doctrine of expiation which rules protestantism to-day. Born of sorrow the most intense,

of fear that was unspeakable, of the extreme bitterness of poverty, want, degradation ; of the conviction that man could do nothing for himself but must abandon effort and abjure will, feeling that if help ever came it must come from above, and that, to obtain it from above nothing that man could do, nothing that man could give would avail aught, the doctrine buried men in ashes. There could be nothing but abject humiliation, a sense of worthlessness and utter prostration of the whole being before the representative of the avenging Christ, an agonized cry that in the breaking up of things this poor helpless unhappy soul might be snatched from the flame. At that time, what more natural than the demand for expiation? A sense of utter worthlessness, degradation, depravity and ill desert become inborn, struck down to the very roots of the human mind. No philosopher was clear headed enough, calm enough in his judgment, to stem the torrent of superstition, but was swept along with the rest to the bitter sea of humiliation. The world of Christendom lay panting on the bosom of the Saviour.

That tremendous experience is not yet outgrown. The moral convulsion occurred nearly ten centuries ago. Yet, so intense was the emotion, its traces still linger in the consciousness of mankind. The Evangelicals will not for centuries to come, outgrow it ; so deeply rooted was the suffering that nothing

less than a complete change in the intellectual and spiritual climate will eradicate the germs of the disease.

There is an impression, due simply to want of information, that the moral moods of mankind are permanent, that while the agitations of thought are felt on the surface of society, the great deeps of feeling are still. Knowledge corrects the mistake. History discloses the fact that waves of feeling sweep over the surface of humanity ; that multitudes of men go from action to reaction, from one extreme to the opposite, from the lowest point of fear to the highest acme of hope ; one extreme generates another. The age of penitence when men clothe themselves in sack-cloth and sit in ashes, will be succeeded by an age of ecstasy when men stand upon their feet, leap, run, dance, trust themselves, believe in their future, behave as if their destinies were in their own hands. As these moods ebb and flow, the creeds of men change, alternate and pass away.

Take as illustration, puritanism in England. The rise of puritanism was due to natural causes. This extraordinary religious manifestation had its root in morals, in the moods of conscience. England had been becoming more and more conventional, showy, external from generation to generation. Ever since the reign of Elizabeth, the final departure from the See of Rome, the defeat of the Armada, the soul of

the people had been declining. Ceremonialism and extravagance set in. The temporal was gaining supremacy over the spiritual. Worldliness reached its height in the time of the Stuarts. Reaction sets in—a reaction towards sobriety, austerity, severity of manner, strict and stern integrity, simplicity going to self renunciation. Calvinism revived. The sense of sin was intense. The conviction became overwhelming, that all this pomp and show passed for nothing, that religion was a serious matter between the soul and its redeemer. Then ensued that profound inward experience, a sense of the dignity of the spiritual being, a foreboding of judgment and doom, the persuasion that immortal man was a centre of interest to all the economies of the universe, which the American revivalist uses as his chief weapon, which is the soul of all living evangelicalism. Fortunately there is a good deal less of that than there was a few years ago. The feeling of an intense reality taking the place of external show and display characterizes Evangelicalism, old and new, German, English, American, it matters not. This phase of emotion passes away and is followed by another mood. Puritanism in modern England cannot hold its own long. The fanaticism becomes oppressive and tiresome. The heat cools down; the intensity declines; and a sober rational state of mind succeeds.

The next phase was Unitarianism, a "system of pale negations," as Emerson calls it, the characteristic of which is good-behaviour, respectability, decency, a calm propriety. It is the religion of the "best people," the religion of the "proper sort," the placid and well to do. It does not take hold of passionate humanity. It has not a warm, expansive, capacious heart. It has not the conscience that goes to the spiritual roots of life. It denotes a reaction from an exaggerated over-strained spiritual condition, and is rather marked by fatigue than energy. This is the reason probably why Unitarianism does not and cannot spread, because it is a local and incidental not a human reaction.

Rationalism, on the other hand, is a human reaction, and rationalism has its roots, too, in morality. It grounds itself upon principle. For now what do we see? Instead of the overwrought earnestness of the evangelical school, there is profound earnestness of another kind, which expresses itself through science, literature, reform, politics, a determination to reach a nobler society, to find the paths of real life. The prophets of this generation are the children of morality. The men who are ruling this age and who shape the religions that are to come, are men who entertain scarcely any technical religious beliefs, who disregard the supernatural, but who are intensely interested in the conditions of social life, students

of nature and of man, bending all their energies to reconcile the world with itself, to put away wars, and slaveries, to reduce the sphere of violence, to diminish corruption, and call into active exercise the natural forces of health. Reasonable men they are, studious, thoughtful, laborious. But they are tremendously in earnest, though with little demonstration. They have an irresistible force and sweep of conscience. These illustrations will suffice, I trust. to show how religion reflects morality, to prove that morality comes first, that morals dictate faith, shape it, color it.

Now the question arises, is morality progressing or retrograding? Are morals higher or lower than they were? Are we gaining or loosing in ethical principle? I contend, with all my might, with the utmost clearness of persuasion, with the utmost earnestness of conviction, that the morals of the civilized world are improving year by year; that we are getting nearer the heart of principles, that we are understanding the drift of laws, that we are comprehending the conditions and taking advantage of the opportunities that work together to make society what it ought to be. We are not called on to pronounce an encomium upon the morals of modern society. They are certainly bad enough. No one has painted them worse than, in my judgment, they deserve. But this is not the question. The ques-

tion is whether morals are getting better or worse. Are they in the way of improvement on past states, or, are they, as many would have us believe, declining? We shall never have perfect morality while there is room for improvement, while the law of Progress holds. Long after we shall have passed from the scene and been forgotten, nothing like a kingdom of heaven on earth will be seen. Let us not boast of the excellence of established morals. Our age has its peculiar dangers, its characteristic vices, its special sins. Every age has. In some respects we are worse than those that have gone before. We have left virtues behind which they possessed. Still, I hold in spite of all that can be said, in spite of all that can be imagined, that the condition of things is vastly and essentially better than it has been.

Neither am I disposed to make too much account of the diminution of special evils in our modern society. It is true that certain gigantic, overshadowing wrongs and crimes that have characterized, cursed and oppressed ages of the world are diminishing in modern communities. That, however, is not an infallible, unmistakable sign that our morality has become so much higher. War, for instance, is very much reduced in its proportions. Wars are less frequent than they were. They are not precipitated as hastily as they were. Diplomacy goes before

them, accompanies them, follows after them; they are deprecated, deplored. This may not be the result of a more humane feeling in regard to the enormity of war. Men are still violent, but they show their ferocity in other ways. Men hate, but do not hate after that fashion. Men kill, but not so brutally. There is less love of bloodshed; is there less malignity? There is no evidence that the new testament has had any considerable effect in diminishing the war spirit. The peace societies have done little or nothing towards promoting pacific relations among men. We have discovered that the interests of peace are paramount, that if we would establish ourselves in comfort and prosperity, if we would make steady progress in the arts of civilized life, we must have peace. War is costly, is disturbing, is disintegrating, and anarchial. It wastes the accumulations of all classes. The mercantile interest, the commercial interest, the working man's interest is all against war, and war consequently disappears, not because we are so much more christian, humane or tender-hearted, but because we are more circumspect and careful.

Slavery is all but abolished now in modern civilization. But what abolished slavery in this country? A sense of justice, a conviction of the inviolability of human dignity, the sacredness of human rights, a warmer heart towards the down-trodden and op-

pressed, a glowing, enthusiastic passion for liberty? That can hardly be said. In spite of all that conscience could do, slavery would probably be existing now. Slavery was abolished as an incident to the civil war. What was the civil war for? The union of the States. It was not a war against slavery but against secession. This was avowed by the highest authority. Slavery was implicated and was smitten, but it was smitten hesitatingly and as a war measure. The war was fought and fought victoriously at immense sacrifice in the northern States, by men who approved of slavery as well as by men who did not, by pro-slavery as well as by anti-slavery people. Multitudes, all through the war, even when they were giving their money and sending their sons down to the front, protested against the unnecessary disturbance of the institution of slavery. Even now there are thousands of unionists who would gladly see the system restored, as the natural system of labor between the white and black races. Slavery was ground to pieces between the upper and the lower mill-stones of the strife.

Similar social influences are at work in our communities to dry up the sources of intemperance. Intemperance is on the decrease decidedly, perceptibly, by the general admission of unprejudiced observers. How is this to be explained? Not by a prevalent conviction of the iniquity of this species of

intoxication, not by a keener sense of the dignity of human nature, not by a well grounded respect for individual purity or domestic peace, but by a current belief that intemperance is ruinous to temporal prospects. It is wasteful of money, time, faculty. It interferes with business; it is an enemy to success. It is no longer reputable or respectable. Its injurious effects on the working powers and on social position have been abundantly demonstrated. Common prudence warns against it. Every consideration of good sense protests against it. All the interests of practical life are its foes, and common wisdom is more potent than the Grace of God. Intemperance is no longer popular or fashionable. It is not in good social repute, as once it was.

Let us then frankly admit what will be claimed, that the diminution of certain vast evils which disappear before the march of civilization is not a sign of increasing moral force. There are still one or two things that are; one or two signs which it seems to me cannot be disregarded.

In the first place, the general sense of dissatisfaction and discontent, the impatient demand for a better state of society, the passionate complaint of evils once unnoticed, are signs that evils are diminishing. When a man begins to find fault with himself, is it not evidence that he is becoming a better man? Those who are perfectly satisfied with them-

selves do not rank high in the list of character. As sensibility of conscience, the first incipient prick of obligation, is the sign of returning moral vitality in the individual, so, public criticisms, exposures, scandal, are signs that men are becoming sensitive to shame, that they are on the look-out for frailty, are not afraid to acknowledge iniquities, to confess enormities, and would have them done away with. The sharp criticism of public servants, the prying inspection into private affairs, the demand that every man shall show his hand, is very uncomfortable, very disagreeable, exceedingly impertinent and insolent; yet, as Emerson said "We cannot spare the coarsest muniment of virtue. We are disgusted with gossip; yet it is of importance to keep the angels in their proprieties." Condemnation evinces conscience. It is important that the signs be understood. As one fraud after another is exposed, as enormity after enormity is dragged to the light, men exclaim: Was there ever such a wicked age, so dishonest, so careless, so heedless of trusts, so treacherous, as this? But, we reply, *the iniquity is weighed and measured;* we put a mark against it; we have our eye on it; we are determined to cast it out. In the ages that went before us, it existed in more formidable proportions, but it was covered up. It was not seen, or, if it was, it was passed over, unchallenged, unrebuked. Now it is seen and denounced.

The demand for a better social state, for purer laws, more equitable civil service, a higher sentiment of honor on the part of officials, fidelity in those who accept trusts, is universal. It is heard all over the community, east and west, north and south, from English, Americans, French, Germans. It is one of the characteristics of the modern age. It is one of the peculiarities of modern society; it indicates a calm determined, rational way of looking at the evils of the world.

I select as another indication, the substitution of reason for feeling in the treatment of social questions. There have always been times when good people felt keenly about wrong, sympathized with suffering and sorrow, and expressed their emotions in burning and eloquent words. At present there is less of this sentimental compassion, but there is a more resolute, quiet, and even method pursued to find out what is wrong and to remedy it.

Take the treatment of the insane, the course adopted towards criminals, the provision for the poor, for the amelioration and eradication of vice. Mistakes are made of necessity; blunders occur continually; still, the most earnest and thoughtful people are at work all the time and on the lines of common sense, sober judgment, knowledge of facts, with a purpose to establish on broad impregnable foundations the principles of a better society. Does not

this indicate a higher mental condition than the world has seen before? It seems to me to indicate nothing else, not so openly on the surface that one who runs can read, but beneath the surface, plain to observing eyes, proving that men have got hold of a principle of universal application, have discovered a truly human law of responsibility, have arrived at the notion that man owes something to man, that one condition hinges on another, that one order of society depends on another, that all, in fact, are one in brotherhood.

Certainly, if there be a moral principle pregnant with results of the utmost importance to mankind, this is. When the heart does not cease to feel, while the judgment does begin to work, then we know that we are no longer subject to caprices, ups and downs, ebbs and flows of passion and sentiment, but have laid the basis for a steady onward march toward permanent conditions.

We begin then with morals. Morals are primary. Morals command at last religion. We must commence building where we are. People complain of morals as being cold, unsentimental, unsympathetic. But warmth, glow, beauty, tenderness, all, in due form grow out of this soil. Be honest, *try* to be honest; make effort to tell the truth; resolve to be just, and you lay the foundation of society. Practice virtue more and more; carry out the refinements,

and at last all that is most beautiful and gracious, friendship, sympathy, compassion, tender mercy, loving kindness, will blossom and bloom all over the surface of life. Nay, the graces that have been considered peculiarly religious, meekness, patience, humility, sweetness, resignation, hopefulness, aspiration—all these will succeed in their time, born out of this same soil. For morals persisted in, understood, completed, are a guard and protection against scepticism. They are the sources of faith.

RELIGION AND IMMORALITY.

Last Sunday I took for my theme Morals and Religion, their relations to each other, their mutual influence, their connection as cause and effect. The point I set forth was this, in brief: That morals and religion had two distinct spheres; that religion made it its task to prepare men for a hereafter; that the business of morals was to prepare men for living here; that religion aimed to make men saints; that morals aimed to make men citizens; that the purpose of religion was to regenerate the soul, that the purpose of morals was to reconstruct society. I gave examples to show that, in history, morals and religion, instead of being closely associated with each other, had always been separate; that morals, in the order of time, and in the order of thought, preceded religion: that religion reflected the moral sentiment of man, whatever that might happen to be, and changed as the moral sentiment of men improved, or the reverse. It was main-

tained that, as the standard of morality was incessantly improving, as the principles of morality were gradually becoming understood and established, religion was taking on new forms and assuming a more beautiful expression.

There is another aspect to this subject which I wish to present this morning. The conclusion reached last Sunday was that morals create religion. The point I wish to press to-day is that under certain circumstances, religion creates morals. The inconsistency is apparent only. In communities such as the most advanced modern communities are, highly organized and developed, in England, America, Germany, France, morals have the start already, are well organized and developed. There is an ethical system, incomplete, but intelligent. Moral principles are accepted, moral axioms are laid down, moral ideas are assumed and lived upon, and made the basis of conduct. In London, New York, Boston, in all the great cities of the modern world, where society is closely compacted, and men by business and other interests are welded together, morality assumes the character of a science, stands on its own foundation and dictates the law to religion. The priest must keep his place in the general order. The preacher is under criticism like the ordinary teacher. The altar and sacraments are remanded to a position by themselves.

There is exceeding jealousy of the intrusion of sacramental or sacrificial religion on the domains of practical life, business, politics, social arrangements; men demand the right to manage those things according to principles that naturally regulate them, and not upon any supercelestial, unnatural, preternatural principles. In the centres of intelligence morality is established and holds the sceptre. But, outside of these centres, where morality is yet undeveloped, where its basis is scarcely laid and its rules are not recognized, religion domineers over morality. In the old world, in the uncivilized parts of Germany, France, the United States, we see how religion presides over morality, prescribes rules to it, commands it, shapes it, tells people how they must trade; bids them conduct their affairs and manage their governments in the interest of the Church, not in the interest of the community.

There was a time when religion had society all to itself; because feelings, hopes, fears, anticipations, come first. Long before men think, study, reason, compare, adjust their ideas, understand themselves, they feel intensely. Their dread of supernatural power is fearful; their hope of blessedness to come to them from a source outside of their lives, takes up all the feelings that their heart can entertain. Thus religion gets established, instituted, organized,

recognized, long before morals came into the field. Hence, we see how it is that religion dictates morality. Although, in the first instance, it may have simply reflected the moral condition such as it was, yet, having possession of the ground, it dictates what the moral principles and feelings of men shall be, and so prevents them from becoming what they naturally would be.

I say that religion has for its object to save the soul from perdition in the hereafter. Now imagine religion instituted, and by religion instituted I mean accepted, recognized, built into form, organized, administered by orders of priests;—imagine this thing going on for thousands of years as Christianity, for instance, has done, so as to become a religion, an accepted practical system, with its priest-hood, its churches, its altars, its sacraments, its creeds, its sacred books, its holy customs, covering the surface of Europe. For ages it has presided over the whole of life. Generations have been born into it, have been reared by it. It has held control of the great universities, the centres of light, in Italy, France, England, Germany. It has presided over the academies of higher education. It has had its ministers in the bosom of every family. It has controlled the nursery, the primary school. It has written the school books. Wherever young people met for instruction, religion has been on the spot to say what

the instruction should be. This is what I mean by *instituted* religion. It is religion made a part of existence. Nobody questions it. Nobody disregards it. So completely a matter of course is it that nobody asks a reason for its existence, or credentials of its authority. Nobody doubts its doctrines, disputes the efficacy of its sacraments, neglects its observances. Generation after generation is born, matured and buried without raising a surmise in regard to its absolute right to rule. Such is instituted religion. It is not your creed, or my creed, or the creed of any company, clique or set; it is the creed of everybody, man, woman and child.

For a thousand years Roman Catholicism was thus the faith of the western world, as the Greek church was the faith of the eastern world, husbanding the sacred sentiments of the people. All the great philosophers were Romanist. The scientific men were believers in the church. Everybody, high and low, strong and weak, rich and poor, wise and foolish—everybody without exception, without hesitation, without compulsion, recognized the binding authority of religion over the whole of life.

Of course, a system of morals followed more complete, more exact, more rigid than had been known before. I say "of course." The object of religion has, we must bear in mind, been to make people

happy hereafter. How was it to do this? In order to guarantee the happiness hereafter, it was necessary that people who professed the religion should be members of the church, should be constant at the sacraments, should avail themselves of the ministrations of the priest: for saving power came from above, from outside. from supernatural sources. Hence, certain moral precepts must be accepted, certain books must be read, certain other books must be avoided, a certain routine of conduct must be gone over. Religion therefore had its prescribed formularies for every act and experience of life. The ministers of religion were in every home, telling the parent how to rear the child, telling the teacher what the child should study, telling the thinker what to think, the student what to learn, the critic what to blame or praise.

We see this system working its way in, until it occupies every field of human life,—the departments of sentiment, emotion, conscience, regulating the motions of hope and fear, standing guard at all the avenues of the intellectual, sentimental and moral world. Here is a system of morals.

Consider the practical effect of the two great doctrines of all instituted religion, upon the moral dispositions of men;—first, *the doctrine of a personal God.* And by a personal God I do not mean an infinite intelligence, will, force, "a stream of tendency," a

"Power outside of ourselves working for righteousness." I mean an individual being watching over the world, in whole and in part, overlooking and ordering every individual life, appointing each particular lot, adjusting every detail of fortune, counting the tears, numbering the disappointments of every one, balancing evil against good, harm against benefit, joy against sorrow, educating men, training them with patient providence and assigning every incident in a varied experience by his discerning will and for his supreme purpose. Think of such an idea as this holding possession of the intellectual and spiritual world say for a thousand years, nobody opposing it, nobody doubting it, nobody repelling it, everybody, old and young, giving to it an implicit, explicit and familiar faith, growing up and working themselves into it!

What is, what must be the consequence? Certainly a state of mind, feeling, will altogether peculiar. Suppose that each one of us firmly and absolutely believed, without the least misgiving or qualification, that a being such as I have described, infinitely wiser, better, more far-seeing, more forecasting than he had the charge of his particular destiny—some guardian angel, some eternal spirit, accompanying him in every point of his career, doing everything that happened to him, undoing everything that was in the nature of misnap to him,

sending calamity, loss, disaster, bereavement; if he were stretched upon the bed of sickness, stretching him there with definite intention; if he was raised up, raising him up for a purpose; in all respects administering every part and particle of private experience; think, I say, of the power of such a belief as that! Believing this one would accept his fate without a question, without a murmur. Is he poor, he must bless his poverty. Is he ignorant, simple, he must be glad that he is not of the company of the wise. Is he cast down, trodden under foot of men, persecuted, oppressed; this too is his privilege. It is a sin to find fault that this being takes the pains to chasten, to educate, to discipline, to lead him on. Blessed be poverty! Blessed be pain, sickness, suffering, toil! Blessed be a lonely and miserable lot! Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the hungry and thirsty. Blessed are they that are persecuted. Blessed are they of whom all men speak ill, for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. Through suffering men are made perfect. Submit and acquiesce. Be grateful for the cross; bow to the rod; take your lot. No matter whether it seems in the eyes of men desirable or not, you know nothing about that. How can you, short-sighted, undertake to pronounce upon it? Accept it as the appointment of a being perfectly wise, and just, and good. If life is rich, be

grateful that it is so. But be careful not to be overweening in your vanity or puffed up in your self-esteem. Do not think too highly of yourself, for if you do it will be all taken away. Such is the moral inference from a belief like this. The ministers of religion repress murmurs and skepticism. The church thunders its denunciations against those who would change the established situation, pervert the order of things. A type of moral sentiment is fostered, the characteristic of which is the abnegation of self, the complete resignation of the person in favor of the Supreme Will. It is a type that, in its leading features is distinctly immoral, for to call that morality which is an abrogation of the moral will, is a misuse of terms.

Advert now to the other cardinal idea of religion, the idea of a conscious hereafter of pain or of bliss. I do not speak now of a rational idea of the hereafter, such as enlightened people may well entertain, a conception that carries into the future the same laws of moral cause and effect that obtain here, but of the ecclesiastical notion, which regards the hereafter as a supplement to this life. The popular religion says: Your life is short. It is, at the most, a few years. How foolish then to undertake to judge the issues of life by the glimpse which the traveller gets as he swiftly passes on! The bar of judgment is not here, in social enactment or private

conscience. Think of the future; prepare for that. Live in the fear of hell, the hope of heaven. Presently it will all be over. Wait. You will not have long to toss on your bed of pain; you will not have long to toil in the stone quarry or the coal mine. Your lot is poor, despicable and mean. What of it? In a few years at most, the golden gates fly open and all is changed. Then for your poverty you shall be rich; then for your patience you shall receive a double reward. Be resigned. Wait, trust, and one day all shall be made up to you. Dives has his good things now. Lazarus will have his good things by and by.

This doctrine of the hereafter is a companion to the doctrine of providence, a supplement to theism; it plays into the hands directly of the theory of a divine superintendence over the mutations of the particular life. Both lay stress on the same qualities, patience, submission, acquiescence, docility. Life's question will be answered for us without seeking. Life's problem will be solved without our uneasiness. The crooked ways shall be made straight without human effort. The rough places shall be made plain without toil, and the revealed will shall be made manifest even to the simplest; what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. Once more, the morality of dependence, is a passive ethics, enervating, discouraging, discharg-

ing the personal will of its responsibility to material and social relations.

Try to conceive, for my imagination is not equal to the task, try to conceive of the effect of giving up these two time honored conceptions. Suppose a man brought, as multitudes are, to the conclusion that there is no such individual God, no such compensating hereafter. What must of necessity follow? Instantly the moral deeps are broken up; a fearful rent is made in the practical moralities on which mankind have been building. Here are actually people, thousands of people, the poor, the toil-worn, the hungry, the wretched, who say that they do not believe any more in this personal inspection of Providence. There is no evidence, they say, of a heavenly Father. Life does not run to that tune. There is no assurance that men are perfected by suffering. The blessing, so far as they see, does not come to the poor, the weak, the forsaken. There is no guarantee for hope but the priest's word, and the priest's word has fallen into discredit.

This, we must admit, is a fearful pass. The working order of society, the conduct of private and public life which was conditioned upon the idea of personal providence is broken up, and no other order is substituted for it. Men say,—the wise men—we must recast our conception of God. We

must charge the word with new meaning. They believe in an infinite intelligence, in an omnipotent but inarticulate will. They believe in a living power that works with energy through the world, expressing itself in all the cosmic forces; the working of this power is inside the universe, not outside of it. To find out the will and way of God, study the natural and social laws. It is not well to try and get out of the world to learn what the world is made of. It is not wise to turn the back upon life in order to understand it. Hence endeavor instead of acquiescence; inquiry instead of dogma; instead of content, discontent; instead of apathy, questioning and seeking; instead of submission, rebellion. Does one wish to know the will of the Supreme? Let him study the conditions of life; let him conform to the principles of mental and moral health; let him master the rules according to which civilized society is organized. Is one ambitious to reach heaven? Let him do his duty as well as he knows how, and try in all practicable ways to do it better to-day than yesterday. This satisfies the instructed, the philosophical, the calm of temper, the reasonable.

But how about the uncultivated, the irrational, the passionate, who have placed their whole reliance upon the personal, presiding providence? what have these to say on the new situation? They

have never been schooled in reflection. They have not the calmness to think, the discipline to inquire; they cannot fall back on these fine philosophical principles. They are creatures of feeling, and their feelings are intense; their wishes are wild. They have hungry and craving natures. What must they think? Will they not reason somehow thus, with themselves? Very well, if there is no individual God, no personal providence, no supernatural and superhuman power to look out for us, we must look out for ourselves. If we are to be our own gods and providences, we may as well assert ourselves and provide. We must get all we can; make ourselves as comfortable as circumstances will allow, snatch all the good things which are within reach, enjoy our day, pluck the flowers while they are blooming. If there is no supreme law over us, if we must be law to ourselves, the sooner and more firmly we enact our desires the better.

The same immoral consequence must follow the disappearance of the current ecclesiastical belief in hereafter. There is no more any use in waiting. If the eternal justice is not prepared to square accounts on the other side of the grave; if there is no use in expecting and hoping; if we cannot be sure of being rich by and by because we are poor now; if we cannot reckon on felicity in the kingdom of heaven as recompense for present misery (and it

looks now if this were so), then we must bestir ourselves to make time go as far as it will. What we want we must get now. We want a good many things; we want all there is. We want pleasure, money, opportunity, privilege, power, a feeling that we have a share in the good things of life, that we count for something in the world. We are of the advice of Paul. "What advantageth it me, if the dead live not? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." In another mood, the apostle says: "Brethren the time is short, I would have you therefore to be without carefulness." The modern working man says: "Brethren the time is short, we must therefore be careful, since there is no to-morrow after to-day." All standards are reversed. What are we to expect from all this? What but unrest, violence, anarchy, an irreligious communism, an irrational socialism? It requires a clear head, a balanced reason, a calm and disciplined temper to face the realities of such a world as modern discovery reveals. Comparatively few are in condition to do it, for few are possessed of the reasonableness, or the self command. The greater number of mankind live in emotions. Instituted religion, be it remembered, has never taken the trouble to make men understand the practical conditions of life. It has not unfolded to them the constitution of the world, or taught them how to live on rational principles. It

has not instructed them in the economies by which they are enabled to make the best of the world as a world, but has rather taught them how they are to get happily out of it. Religion, that is to say, has not encouraged morality, but rather discouraged it, partly by keeping in view an object which morality cannot accomplish, and yet more, by exaggerating the part which feeling is called to perform, subordinating, in fact, judgment to emotion. Hence, multitudes of people, the people who need direction most, hopeless, helpless people, find themselves plunged into an unbelief the only logical issue of which is immorality.

Moreover, instituted religion by playing thus incessantly upon hopes and fears, heightening them in the most extravagant manner—has been steadily undermining the foundations of morality. Not merely by appealing openly and eagerly to selfishness, but by stimulating the appetite for sensitive bliss. It excites inordinate expectations. Morality goes with judgment, sobriety, common sense, knowledge. Feeling is always dangerous to morality, and when feeling is fanned to flame, when every expression of it is made intense to fanaticism, excessive, and overwrought, it may be fatal to morality. But has not religion, for nearly two thousand years, in the best part of the world been doing this very thing, plying conscience with knotted whips of

terror, and holding out to hope the pleasant anticipation of joy to come? Hell and heaven are threats and bribes, the use whereof is incompatible with nobleness. The instituted, sanctified employment of them, for centuries of time, could hardly result in anything else than the weakening of the very basis of the moral will.

We are not surprised then at the cry that comes from the depths of a passionate discontent, from toilers and sufferers, working men and working women, who suddenly open their eyes to the appalling truth that they must get out of life what they can.

To get the most out of life! That is an easy thing to say; it is the most difficult of all things to do. It is not an easy thing to *say* intelligently. To get out of life all there is in it,—none ever lived who succeeded in doing that; for none ever comprehended the wealth of the world, or fathomed the depth of its possibilities. The time has not come for any man to be wise, discerning, deep hearted, earnest and noble enough to get out of life all that life contains.

I stood in a populous graveyard. It was a city, a veritable city of the dead. There they were, the old and the young; some worn out with trouble, toil and care, some overcome before the wear and tear of existence began, little babes who had not

fairly begun to live, boys and girls, young men and women on the threshold of their career; joyless, heart-broken dames and sires they all were alike silent and still. Was there one of them all who had used his life? Not one. This one lacked intelligence. That one lacked sympathy. This one lacked will. That one lacked purpose and ambition. This one had too much impulse, overshot the mark, and dashed himself to pieces against destiny. Not one of the slumbering thousands understood fully what he was made for, understood himself and his position, arranged his circumstances wisely, and lived, all things considered, a complete life. It was but a fragmentary existence that the best endowed had spent.

The world is a large place, and life is a large arrangement. Human nature is an ocean, not a pond. Human society is not so perfectly simple as many fancy. It is exceedingly complicated. The relations of men are interwoven with such extreme delicacy and cunning, that, to satisfy them all, overtasks the competency of the most sufficient.

Make the most of life! Why the wisest men who have lived, the deepest thinkers, the most earnest of purpose have been trying to discover for thousands of years how to make the most of life, on what principle one might make the most of life, what one was to do, what one was to avoid

who wished to make the most of life. The books of wisdom, sacred and profane, abound in directions. Philosophers, sages, economists, saints have given their prescriptions. The Bible teems with precepts. The political economists, the disciples of social science too, are devoting all their energies to the discovery of the best way to get the utmost out of life. Thus the conditions are laid down.

1. Life should be made as long as possible. The old Bible promises length of days to the wise, that is to the just, the good, the religious. It makes no such promise to the idle, the slipshod, the foolish, the dissolute. Length of life is reckoned a boon. Modern science takes up the word. The test, one of the primary tests of a satisfactory civilization, is longevity. The community that can bring the greatest number of children to healthy maturity, can carry the greatest number of adults to old age, can secure the greatest amount of vigor, health, enjoyment to all classes, so far justifies itself. Length of days is still one of the criteria of a good life, for it implies temperance, frugality, continence, regard for the conditions of prosperity. Is one desirous of obtaining this blessing? Then must he practice moderation in pleasure, cultivate the virtues of prudence and obedience, cherish simplicity, abstain from eradicating vices, avoid unseemly violence, repress anarchical and tempestuous disposi-

tions. He must study peace and good will, and thus substitute economy of force for waste, encouraging the powers that build up. Reason reinforces, passion squanders, vice destroys. To escape wear and tear is wisdom; but to escape wear and tear lays a duty on conscience and soul, which the foolish cannot understand. The violent heats of partisanship are perilous to steady growth. The misguided and unregulated stand in danger of the State prison, and that shortens life. They may be shot down, and that shortens life a good deal. Longevity implies material ease and comfort, admitting reasonable contentment, easy social relations, circumstances that do not rasp or fret, and to create these it is necessary that impulse should be submitted to judgment, and that reflection should be strong enough to subordinate desire.

2. The next condition on which the most is to be extracted from the world is that our days on earth be not only long, but happy. Freedom from misery, from sickness, perplexity, heart-ache and corroding care, is a condition of successful life. A miserable life cannot by any stretch of interpretation be called well used life, for misery means waste, dissatisfaction, discord. How does one make himself happy? Not by putting himself out of tune with himself and his circumstances, not by running the risk of misfortune, jeopardizing his chances of felicity. The

hero may do this; the philanthropist may do it; the reformer; but these do not seek happiness. They are exceptions to the rule. We must not pitch our doctrine on the heroic key. We may be simple, lowly—wise, and say frankly the aim is to make life happy. But the thief does not make his life happy; neither does the libertine, or the drunkard, or the betrayer of trusts, or the man who puts himself seriously out of joint with his fellow men, who makes enemies instead of friends, who avoids responsibilities, neglects claims, is reckless, violent, self-indulgent in offensive ways, brutal, intrigueing. Such men all incur the risk of perpetual unhappiness. Their very existence is precarious. Hence, it has become a trite saying that the people who wish to make the most of life, must practise the old childlike virtues of sincerity, veracity, consideration, kindness. They must not think of themselves first, but must be willing to believe that they can learn as well as teach, that the right to be served must be balanced by the zeal to serve.

3. Yet a third condition for getting the utmost out of life is that life shall be harmless. I do not contend that it should be noble, great, magnanimous, or even conspicuously useful. I do not contend that one should aim to fill the world with the fame of his exploits, that he should endeavor to confer some great benefit upon mankind; it will be

enough to abstain from whatever hurts his fellow men; it will be enough so to live that others' living may not be harder, that the poor may not be poorer, the weak weaker, the hapless more exposed. This, it will be allowed, is a simple problem. How to make the world better it is very difficult to ascertain. Mistakes are easy and frequent here. It sometimes looks as if there were little beside mistake. The benefactors whom all consent to honor as such are few indeed,—differences of feeling being as wide as differences of opinion. What one esteems a benefit, another denounces as a detriment. But how *not to harm* the world; that is a simple thing. Do not cheat; do not lie; do not betray; do not undermine the physical or moral health; do not make light of social advantages; do not fly in the face of immutable facts; do not impugn the established principles of rectitude; do not make war on institutions that will yield to the power of reason; throw no stumbling block in the way of your neighbor, but open paths as far as you can; multiply opportunities; increase privileges; make it worth while for people with whom you associate to say and think pleasant things of you. Thus, at least, you do no harm,—if you do not directly diminish the bulk of evil, you sustain the mass of good; you are conservative of the best; you belong to the salt of the earth; you are a pillar of strength. The least

that can be required of any rational being is that he shall live a harmless, an innocent life, as far as he can. Do they live innocent lives who are perpetually tearing up the rails upon which human progress runs, destroying the cumulative efforts of their fellow men by rash expressions of passion, hampering their hard endeavors to lift themselves out of weakness and poverty? No, no, these are the people who are dragging back,—oh, bitter and sad performance,—who are dragging back this poor stumbling humanity, which for thousands of years has been pushing its slow way over the sharp slippery stones, trying to secure steady ground for its feet to rest on. Alas for those who do anything to make the task of progress any harder than it is for a single human being!

If now we are to have a religion that helps morality instead of hindering it, we must have a new conception of religion—a *new religion*, with new creeds, a new order of sentiment, new institutions—a religion that is fully sympathetic with man, a religion that plants itself upon the conditions of success in this life, that bids men study their human duties, and accommodate themselves to their human relations; a *human* religion, in which the conception of man is substituted for the conception of God; in which duty, responsibility, obligation, shall consist not in the performance of works pleasing to

an invisible being outside the world, but in the sincere effort to secure the happiness, comfort, satisfaction, elevation, enlightenment of human beings in the world where duty is actually to be done; a religion which shall lay the foundations of piety in obedience to the faculties of human nature as they are unfolded, and to social relations in proportion as they are understood, and which, for new light resorts not to prophet, saint or priest, not to sacred scriptures, old testament or new, but to the revelations that come in the form of practical knowledge, through careful and conscientious study of the requirements and conveniences of existence in this year of the world's history.

The religion of humanity, the church of humanity, this is what we are coming to; the conservative faith based on observance of the moral law, the religion of intelligence. Its creed is not yet written, but it is a-making. Its sentiments are scarcely more than indicated and suggested. Its duties are slowly defining themselves. Its future is shadowy, but how immense, how glorious in vision, as it rises veiled before the eyes of those who think, feel, aspire. Give us a rational religion to meet a rational morality. Then religion will not be chargeable as it has been with immoralities, cardinal and deep seated, but will lend all its influence, its power and charm to the furtherance of those simple arrangements of

duty and kindness on which the happiness and welfare of mankind depend. The new rational religion shall be a fountain of health, for body, mind, and soul, the parent of a new morality—the sweetest that the world has ever seen.

THE CONSOLATIONS OF RATIONALISM.

The consolations of rationalism. Are there any? And if there are, how shall we describe them? I take up a sermon of Theodore Parker, entitled, "Conscious Religion a source of joy." In that discourse he describes in glowing language the joy that gladdens the face of creation and warms the heart of man, making one feel as if the world was saturated with joyfulness down to the very roots. Parker was a joyous man, warm, elastic, vigorous, always ready to rejoice with those that rejoiced; at the same time he was a keen observer of human life, of warm and active sympathies, one of the most tender hearted of men. His daily walk led him into the haunts of poverty and wretchedness, of disappointment and sorrow, of crime and sin. All misery breathed its complaint into his listening ear. With open hand and ready speech he ministered as he could to the evils that afflicted his kind. What sustained him? A faith in providence, and a

faith in the hereafter. The deepest conviction in the breast of Theodore Parker was the conviction of the existence of an absolutely wise, just, good and loving being, who ordered the world according to a perfect law, in the interest of perfect goodness. And he believed in a hereafter where everything was to be set right, where all questions were to be answered, every problem was to be solved, and humanity was to come to the fullest possession of its powers. Consequently, when Theodore Parker saw pain, he saw the purpose behind it. When he saw misery, he saw the wisdom that guided it. When he looked on sorrow and sin he perceived the divine purpose that sweetened the one and sanctified the other.

There was sent me the other day through the mail a little pamphlet bearing this title, "Is the universe governed by a devil?" It was evidently written by a calm, even-minded man, sympathetic, but not exuberantly so; a man of earnest moral sense and quick moral feeling, who felt himself called to face the facts of the world and to look fate in the eye. Not I should say a deeply religious man—certainly not a sentimentalist, not a dreamer, not a man of high or elastic hope, but a man who grimly and resolutely pushed his way, and tried to look at things as they were. The conclusion he came to evidently was that the only

escape from the conviction that the universe was governed by a devil, lay in the belief that it was not *governed* at all. He saw no guiding thread to follow, no clue that pointed towards a heavenly Jerusalem. He saw the poverty, the misery, the crime, the suffering, the sin. The redeeming grace and purpose he saw not; therefore, with sturdy blow and inexorable will, he beat down the guards which faith and feeling and hope and trust threw up to shield and shelter the head of the victim man from the strokes that nature had rained upon him. It is certain, he says, that to millions of human creatures life is no boon, but the reverse. They are not grateful for it. They count it a curse instead of a blessing. They lie down at night with a secret wish in their hearts that they may never see another morning. They wake not to welcome a new day, but to bewail a new infliction. They look back upon a childhood of hereditary infirmity, of pain and neglect, a youth of bitterness, humiliation, restraint, repression, upon a manhood beset with endless care, worry, disappointment and defeat. And there they are now, perhaps with wrinkled faces and gray hairs, sitting in the ashes, with strips of sackcloth much as ever covering their shrinking forms.

The aspect of life is not happy as one looks at it with clear, undimmed, unflinching eye. The sur-

face of life, except here and there in sheltered or privileged spots, is not glad. The masses of mankind all over the world, except in the most favored spots, are poor. Their lives are spent in hardship and trial and struggle. There is a little margin perhaps for repose and pleasure, no privilege, scarcely an hour of the day when they can lie down in peace and sleep, no literature, no art, no recreation in nature, no joy in society; their children perhaps want bread, their wives need care, nursing and comforts that they are unable to bestow. All their days are spent in the effort to lay up a few dollars to bribe the gaunt wolf, want, to stay away from the door. Scanty supplies are laid up for the rainy day, and these are eked out by low-moaning hope that the rainy day may never come. This is the lot of all but the favored few.

A few here and there, in the choice centres of civilization, have more than they can use of money, time, privilege, opportunity, and those few are oppressed by their surplus. They are not capable of mastering their own life. They cannot fill out their own canvas. They can only eat so much, drink so much, spend so much on clothes, amusement, recreation, and they lack the taste, the education, the trained skill, the commanding, consuming interest in affairs to open new avenues of usefulness. They are oppressed with care, anxiety and trouble.

They must guard themselves against losing what they possess. They must watch their investments, protect their income. So their life passes away, and, in the meantime, there are millions of men and women who hold their little all by such a precarious tenure that it may be taken away at any moment; an unfavorable season, the failure of a single crop, an unlucky investment, a period of war, or famine, or pestilence, may desolate their homes, stop their supplies, cut off their incomes, send them back to the ground whence they have painfully emerged. They are at the mercy of all the vicissitudes of the modern world. They live on the slope of a volcano. A Russian Czar, a Turkish Sultan, a German Emperor, an English Prime Minister, an American Congress holds their fate and the fate of thousands and hundreds of thousands at the movement of caprice. There is a war, and these are the people who suffer. The poor become poorer, the wretched are made more wretched. Theirs are the hovels that are burned; theirs the farms that are desolated; theirs the husbands, brothers, toilers, bread-winners who are tumbled promiscuously into the bloody ground. Their widows, sisters, brides mourn, lament, break their hearts; their orphaned children wander homeless or pitifully struggle up again into light. Thus the endless round goes on. It is considered doubt-

ful whether the time will ever come when the majority of mankind will be anything but poor.

We do not see these things as we pass along the street. The superficial observer does not note the signs of sadness. But who, that has an observing eye or a feeling heart or a watchful mind, fails to see that life is not a joy, a consolation, or a boon to the great multitudes of his kind. Add to all this, the universal experience of death which confronts all mankind, death, universal and omnipresent; death and the imminent danger of death. Rich and poor, young and old, happy and sad, all go down before it, all are exposed to it. It asks no question. It makes no excuses. It does not wait your convenience or mine. It does not ask whether it is conferring a boon or whether it is inflicting a misery. It goes on ruthlessly, and the medical art of thousands of years, has not disarmed that ancient foe.

We speak of Providence. We say life is a school; experience is an educator; existence is a discipline. Yes, but it is a school where lessons are taught in an unknown tongue, where the books are written in a tongue that nobody can read, and the teachers use signs instead of speech. It is a gymnasium where the instructor does not seem to understand the pupils, and the pupils do not understand the implements. If we could only be sure that a superintending

power, wisdom, love, looked after the individual interest—the *individual* interest—that is the thing, not the interest of ages, not the welfare of man, but your happiness and mine, then we could look with calm and tranquil eye upon the world. But can this be proved? One may *believe* it; may hope for it; may have an abstract conviction of it; but can it be proved? Have we never seen the righteous forsaken and his seed begging bread? I see it everyday of my life.

No man who walks the streets of a modern city any week of any month of the year fails to see many instances of unmerited suffering. No doubt the education of the race goes on. Mankind in the long run are trained, educated and disciplined. Humanity is wiser and better for the sorrow, more human for the agony. But how is it with the separate man and woman? Is the individual perfected by suffering? Now and then he is. There are few of us perhaps who cannot think of somebody who is better—much better—who is even transformed, transfigured, glorified, by the hardship, struggle, disappointment, the bitter sorrow of life. I know men and women who have been made even saintly by it, trained to be conspicuous examples of courage and virtue, patience and sweetness, in consequence of it. But for every one of these, I know ten who have been crushed by it, soured, embittered,

prostrated, demoralized, made utterly vacant. Now the argument, if it goes for anything, must go so far as to allow that a providence which does not take care of the individual, is no providence from whose care the individual can take comfort.

At this point comes in the faith in the hereafter. Can this be proved? In order that faith in the hereafter may be truly consoling, it must be famil arly entertained, a close, near, vital faith, so intimate as to be veritably a part of the mind. How many who believe in immortality, believe it thus? I have been a clergyman more than thirty years. I have sat by the dying in their last hours. I have attended the funerals of all classes of people, of all faiths. I have seen people in all stages of disappointment, despondency, and grief. I have been in close communion with men and women, in the hours of deepest and tenderest experience, in their times of strength and of weakness. Rarely has the faith in immortalility justified its promise in the critical emergency. I have not yet found people of any creed who welcomed death because it swung open the golden doors into another world. I have never stood in the chamber of sorrow, or before a company of mourners and been made to feel the sunshine and air of the heavenly land. The serene face of the dead, calm and placid, expressed a silent rebuke to the desolated mourners draped in solemn

and heavy black, wiping the tears from their eyes and choking the sobs in their bosoms. Did they believe in the hereafter? If I had suggested a misgiving in regard to its certainty in their presence they would have been horrified. And yet did they believe it? The faith exists generally as a dogma, a tradition, a legend of the Sunday-school, of the church. It is entertained in glad hours. It is professed when we are talking at our ease on theological questions; but in the hour of experience when the faith should be a pillar of support, the professing believers in it, orthodox people, Christian people, feel it bend and break under the serious pressure that they put upon it.

Then again, before we can call this faith in the hereafter a perfect consolation, we must assume a great deal which the bare doctrine does not contain. Suppose it be proved that we live again, is it proved that we shall live happily or contentedly? that a perfect compensation will prevail in the hereafter by direction of perfect wisdom and love? Are we sure that there justice will be rendered to everybody who has been wronged, that there the crooked will be straight, and the rough smooth? The same providence must rule the next life that rules this. Is equity the rule here? The same love must govern the world to come, that governs the world in which we live. Is the world as we see it, sweet

with mercy? What right have we to assume that there everything will be conducted on new principles? that there Lazarus will rest sweetly in Abraham's bosom, while here, to the very last day of his life he lay at Dives' gate, grateful to the dogs who lapped his wounds? Is not here an unwarrantable assumption! Are we not asking too much?

Again, to make the consolation perfect that comes through belief in a hereafter, there must be an assurance that in the new world there will be a reunion of those who were sundered, that we shall find our own again. Have we reason for thinking so? Grant the certainty of another life; can we be perfectly sure that the heart's desire shall be gratified there? On this point misgivings will arise. Feel as certain of the hereafter as we may in our hours of calm thought, yet, when the mind is disturbed and the heart is wrung, it needs more than a speculation to keep us still.

And how few, after all, are really consoled! Men forget; they think of something else; they become interested in other matters; their attention is called away by incidental circumstances; they fall back upon society, their friends, their kindred; they become callous and inpenetrable. Other influences crowd in, the power of routine, the habitude of daily life, the incessant occupations that fill the hours, the necessity of meeting requirements as they

come, all these lay their deposits upon the mind, covering up the waste place, All seems calm and sunny on the surface, yet down at the bottom the wound will still bleed.

Why do many men live, we ask? Why not more suicides? These are, all things considered, very few. Is it because the dread of something after death, "puzzles the will and makes us rather bear the ills we have, than fly to others which we know not of?" Undoubtedly this is the case in a great many instances. I have known myself instances in which it was the case. And yet, the numbers that have been restrained from suicide by considerations of this sort are comparatively few, are not appreciable in the table of statistics, Hope, faith that to-morrow may bring something better than to-day, that the rain storm may pass over, that the door of opportunity so long shut will be opened, that something favorable will happen, an instinctive clinging to life, a stubborn, headlong determination to fight the battle out, these are what keep men alive in their want and pain. While there is life there is hope.

The City of London is the largest, the most luxurious city in the modern world. The vicissitudes of fortune are greater there than anywhere else. The struggle and strain of life are probably more intense in London than they are in any other city.

And yet, twenty years ago, the number of suicides in London was but two hundred and forty. It varied from that, on the one side reaching two hundred and sixty-six, and on the other side sinking to two hundred and thirteen. These differences were caused by modifications in the social system, by changing circumstances and varying fortunes. In the year of the great railway panic, when the foundations of credit were shattered, when those that had had much had little, and those that had little had nothing, the rate of suicide touched its highest point. The next year showed a slight improvement. There were ten suicides less. The next year things were still more comfortable, and suicides were less frequent by ten more. The number declined in good years, when prosperity returned, to two hundred and thirteen. That was the lowest point. There came another convulsion, and the rate was raised again to two hundred and fifty. Thus it oscillates, not at the bidding of religious convictions, but according to the price of bread. The practical question was, is the burden of life tolerable, or is it not? If it is not, we go; if it is, we stay.

The ordinary consolations of religion having spent their force, we come to the consolations of rationalism. What are they? Let me frankly admit that they are of a very robust and vigorous

sort. They are not comfortable for idlers or sentimentalists, or cowards, but to clear-sighted men and brave women, who are prepared to face fortune, and make the best of the world as they find it, they commend themselves. In the first place the rationalist is released from the necessity of justifying the ways of God to men. This may not seem to be a great gain, but it is an enormous advantage, a saving of power, not to be obliged to prove that everything is just and good in the world. To be released from the necessity of making constant apologies for Providence, of explaining events in accordance with the best feelings of the human heart, of getting up a grand philosophy by which we can account for the ugliest passages in experience. This is the problem that has weighed upon intellectual men for thousands of years. What time it has consumed! What intellectual energy it has exhausted! What oceans of hope it has drained dry! What spiritual vitality it has wasted! —all of it of instant, immediate vital consequence to the world.

Here is one theory much lauded. It is maintained that this is the best possible world. Its advocate bends all his energy to prove that it *is* the best possible world; he pushes uncomfortable facts out of sight; passes over a great many unpleasant things; puts a forced construction upon desolating

experiences; sees varieties of good in evil; thinks that evil itself is a spectre, a shadow, a cloud passing over the surface of the earth; that really there is no such thing as pain, or suffering, or sorrow; that it is just as one happens to think. The argument has been ably conducted by the finest minds of the race, and in the closet it looks plausible. But it is terribly racked and strained by experience; and men of keen sensibilities groan and faint under the task of supporting it. Many an honest, vigorous, independent thinker abandons the attempt.

The Christian has it on his conscience to demonstrate the fact that an invisible stream of celestial influence flows into the believing patient heart that trusts in Christ, keeping it always serene and still, pure and sweet, under any of the exigencies of the world! In the first place, those who are presented as examples of this high inspiration are exceedingly few. The great mass of mankind do not believe in Christ at all, have no such confidence, no such trust, no such hope, and consequently no such expectations of grace. The majority of mankind therefore must be ruled out of account; not a cheerful consideration. Then, can the Christian be sure that, of the small company of his elect, all are secure in their election? that the stream of Divine grace does, or will, descend at need into the afflicted breast? Are there no misgivings in regard to the

fidelity with which the conditions have been kept? Are any justified in a steadfast hope? Is the faith unwavering? Is the patience serene? So much cannot be affirmed in view of facts apparent to even careless observers.

At all events, the rationalist has no such task laid upon him. He takes the world as it is; has no preconceived theory about it. He does not feel obliged to make it out a better or a worse world than the facts warrant. He will make it out as good as he can. He will go behind the facts if he can. He will learn more and more about the constitution of the universe. He will apply science. He will call in the aid of philosophy. He will make the trained intellect groan and sweat under the task of investigation. He will fight against despondency; but he will not dogmatize or apologize, or declare that things are other than they are. He will save his intellectual and moral force to make things *better* than they are. This is an enormous gain, an unspeakable relief. Well I recollect how many years I myself staggered under this burden of proof; how I went to chambers of sorrow, to houses of want, to cells of crime; looked into the sad eyes of the mourners, or pressed my bosom against the sufferer's beating heart, and felt bound to tell them that things were for the best; that the calamity had not fallen aimlessly; that there was a

kind intention in it which would be disclosed in due time; that God would mend all. I bade farewell to that task long ago, and now I take my brother in manly fashion by the hand, look him straight in the eye, and, explaining to him life as well as I, in my simplicity and ignorance, know how, then leave it; and I find that he is more consoled, because more honestly consoled. He is put upon his intellect, and intellect proves in the end to be his best friend. The spirit of truth is the comforter.

Another consolation belongs to the rationalist. He has not imposed upon him the task of saving his soul. Those who have not reflected upon it have no conception of the pain, the sorrow, the mental agony that comes from this responsibility. I read the history of some of the noblest men and women who have ever lived. They have but one aim, one purpose in life—to save their souls. No matter what else they do; no matter how useful they are; no matter how faithfully they cultivate their powers, and improve their occasions; no matter how truly they stand in their place and perform their duty, unless they can be sure that their soul is safe from perdition, it is nothing. *Can they ever be sure?* Have they neglected nothing? Have they punctually attended the sacraments? Have they listened dutifully to the full complement of sermons? Have they practiced constantly the les-

sons inculcated by the teacher? Have they restrained their natural desires? Have they spent enough money on their neighbors, and little enough on themselves? Have they renounced pleasure and ambition? Have they crucified their passions? Have they read the Bible thoughtfully and understood it? Are they sure there is no alloy of skepticism in regard to the divine text? Are they in the right paths? Have they prayed fervently enough? Have they prayed with their hearts, morning and night—prayed down to the roots of their souls? If not, can they be sure? The door may open, it may not. If it does not, then all has been in vain; life is lost. This perpetual misery and torment we are discharged from. Our concern is not to save our souls, but to do our duty as life goes on. We can consequently train ourselves according to the rules of nature, cultivate our native faculties, use our given opportunities, enjoy our allotted privileges, make the most of society and endowment, free from that misgiving in regard to the future which is the torment of the superstitious. We can lie down and rest. We can sit under the shadow of the trees. We can laugh and sing. We can employ our talents, such as they are. We need not knock our heads in despair against our spiritual limitations. We can draw in strength from nature, from the gladness of the morning, from the peace of the evening, from

intercourse with friends. In a hundred ways we can appropriate the refreshing waters of life, and quench our thirst. Is not that a consolation? To me it is one of the greatest. For in hours of fatigue, disappointment, mistake and misgiving, at any rate I can, without self-reproach, sit still. I am not bound to speculate or wonder. I am released from the duty of tormenting myself with the possibilities of destiny. I can blamelessly play or sleep, leaving my soul to be taken care of in the natural way of health and buoyancy, welcoming even thoughtlessness to do whatever kind offices it will.

Another consideration of immense moment is the limitation of moral responsibility which rationalism allows. The rationalist knows what he can do, and what he cannot do, and is satisfied to do what he can, and to leave the rest undone. This is not a satisfaction which the ordinary believer can have, for he is never persuaded that he has done his duty. The limit of responsibility is beyond his sight. He must always be clad in armor. He must always have the naked sword in his hand. He must be always ready for the march and the battle. But we, who study ourselves and human life, perceive that temperament, heredity, training, talent, opportunity, privilege are given in diverse measure. One can do much, another can do little, another can do nothing. One is hero, another is clown. And we

are content to drop our little drop of dew on the desert place where we happen to dwell, and trust that the verdure will come. The incubus of a sense of unlimited responsibility is taken off. I am not answerable for the condition of all sinners. I have my own affairs to attend to, you have yours. Mind your business, I will mine; and let each judge of his business by his capacity.

The relief of taking this position fairly and freely, once for all, is measureless. The relief is in exact proportion to the earnestness of the man. One goes now with a free and jocund step. He can enjoy his life and reap the benefits of recreation. But there is no hearty enjoyment in life; there is no natural rest or recreation; there is no normal recuperation of power, so long as one feels all the time that he is not at liberty to sit down, that he cannot innocently take a vacation, that he must not drowse or dream away the days, or fling himself on the grass, or imagine that his work is done; that he must always be looking out for some new duty. Ah! that overtasked word "duty"—how much it means of heaviness and sorrow; how much of useless endeavor and chasing after wind! But for those people who go rattling and tearing through the world, shouting the word "Duty!" "Excelsior!" how many heart strings would yield sweet music!

There remains, too, for all men, the consolation, the deep and natural consolation of human sympathy. The Christian has sympathy with Christ, with God, with the Virgin Mary, with some imaginary saint or spirit. The Rationalist cherishes sympathy with his neighbor who is a sharer with him in want and pain. He draws supply of strength from humanity itself in visible form. When queen Victoria lost her husband, unable to console herself, although a good churchwoman, she repaired to a hospital, day after day, and read by the bedside of some poor woman, who knew not who she was. The communion with common misery entertained and soothed her. Which was the comforter? The bed-ridden woman—not the queen; not the royal head of England, but the lowly subject, indebted to charity for food and shelter.

Sympathy distributes force. That is the secret of it. Lose yourself and so gain yourself. When the imperial Goethe lost his only son, he studied Greek, devoted himself assiduously to the acquisition of a new language, and in that employment found himself again, yea, more than himself, as he communed with those exalted spirits of the past, whose grandeur and magnificence, whose sweet stateliness still support and gladden heroic minds. Forget yourself in others. Let others give you of their store. Lay a portion of your burdens on

somebody's else shoulders. Let your friend, your neighbor, your kinsman, come in and take a portion of your burden. So much of it is gone.

The water finds its level. The tempest abates. The high become the low, the low become the high, and a salutary diffusion of character equalizes the moral condition of men. The ministration is perfectly simple and unceremonious. One can begin where he is. A single friend's sympathy is enough; if you are heroic, eager for some achievement, hungry for stronger meat, there are reforms waiting for strong hands; there are poor people to be lifted up, sick people to be comforted and consoled, melancholy people to be cheered; they are within your reach. Is your heart empty? Let them fill it. Is your mind barren and vacant? The discovery awaits you that there are many who have more cause for barrenness and vacancy than you have, who can yet fling you a crust out of their superfluity.

The great consoler, after all, is moral health, character, manliness, womanliness, the human in every breast. The question is a very homely one. Are you stronger than destiny, or is destiny stronger than you? Can you throw fate, or does fate get you down? There is the whole story in a nutshell. Increase yourself, multiply and augment your intellectual resources, strengthen your heart, make your-

self equal to the occasion and the occasion will be less than you are, will be tributary to you.

A traveller in the Alps, with his companion, was overtaken by the storm. His companion, weaker than he, succumbs to the biting wind and the pelting snow and lays down to die. The other feels the faintness creeping into his own heart, but, rallying himself with great effort, begins to rub into life his inanimate friend. In the stress of his labor, he forgets the wind, the cold, the bitter snow. His own blood begins to tingle in his veins. His courage, his energy return. As he toils over his prostrate comrade, welcoming every sign of reviving consciousness, he becomes a man again. He lifts his friend from the ground, and the two fare on their way until they reach the hospice where they find shelter and warmth. Would you comfort yourself? Comfort your brother. Would you save yourself? Save him. You give your life for him, he gives his life for you. It is a fair return — give and take. We can give no more than we get. We shall not give one-half that we receive.

Life is a battle. It is only by fighting that we acquire the power to fight. It is by marching that we become inured to exposure and toil. The weariness comes from inactivity. We cannot sally out and take the fatigue of a long campaign, but strength will come with exercise. The soldier, after

the campaign, is so much in love with the open air that he cannot sleep in a bed. So it is in the wrestling with fate. We must make destiny our tributary, companion, friend, and extort from it the blessing it would fain withhold. How much there is in that Old Testament legend of the patriarch wrestling at midnight with his unseen foe! "I will not let thee go until thou bless me," and he gets the blessing.

The elements beat down our house. We learn the next time to build a better. An accident sends our ship to the bottom. The next time we provide against the accident. A thunderbolt lays in ruin our warehouse; we chain the thunderbolt and command it to bear our errands. Steam threatens to explode and throw our fabric into the air; we cage it, keep it, train it and make it pull our trains. Thus we gain in wisdom, in understanding, in composure, fortitude, courage, cheerfulness, as the work of subduing the world goes on. Moral order forms itself by slow degrees. Harmony comes in; peace and beauty and music all take their turn. After stumbling and falling and groping a hundred times, we walk over the surface of the planet.

We are all soldiers in this war; some major-generals, some commanders of lower degree, colonels, captains, some men in the ranks. Whatever we do, whatever our office, if we do that well, we win. The

general-in-chief travels over Europe from end to end, and congratulations greet him wherever he goes. Royalty condescends to give him welcome. The most honorable do him honor. He is called the greatest soldier of the age, the saviour of the Union. In the spring we were dropping flowers upon the graves of a multitude of men, the unknown, the unremembered, who simply gave their lives. What would the general have done without these? Their fortitude, their patience, their endurance, their courage, their readiness to go to the front, their willingness to return again and again to the charge, their determination not to be beaten, the persistency with which they stood shoulder to shoulder, each in his place, the eye running along the polished steel of the rifle, constancy in doing this year after year, rest in the hospital, brave return to camp, new exposure at the front, and at last the patient sinking into the ground, supplied the moral force of the nation. Who won the battle? They did. Who carried the day? Every one of these.

Last autumn, I made a journey between Boston and New York. The autumn winds were sighing among the trees. The red leaves were dropping to the ground and here and there were piled up in masses to be carried away by the blast. All was desolate, wild and dreary. All spoke of gloom and

disaster. Lately I made the same journey in the spring. Masses of loveliness covered hillside and meadow; the forest tree laughed with joy; there was beauty and life everywhere. Where did it come from? From the incessant, the indomitable life that beats in the ground and changes death to life, gloom to glory. Those dead leaves that had fallen all summer long did their work in disinfecting the atmosphere, cooling the ground. Now that their task was over, they fluttered down to their bed to be forgotten. Yet, unless this process were gone through every autumn, the massive splendor of the year would never greet the mortal eye. Which of the myriads of leaves that fluttered down and rotted in the ground made the summer? *Every leaf!*

THE DEMAND OF THE AGE ON RELIGION.

As we meet together once more after an unusually long separation the old question, returns, why do we ever meet at all? Among the mountains, by the sea, on the fragrant hill-side, you have found yourselves quite able to dispense with the Sunday religious service. Many of you have not been to church at all, and have found yourselves quite as happy and peaceful and joyous and good as when you availed yourselves of the weekly opportunity. I confess to you for my own part, that I have asked myself every Sunday as it passed by, whether that way of passing the Sunday was not as good as any other, and the question has more than once arisen in my own mind whether it would be worth while to resume these services. For of what use? Why should an educated, trained man give himself up to the preaching of religion in these days when all literature is open to him? Why should a company of men and women take the pains, in an earnest world

like this, to meet together and listen to discourses on religious themes when politics and business and the concerns of life are pressing anxiously for answer, day after day, and demanding more than all the strength that they have? These are costly hours, —costly in money and in time. It does not become people who count the worth of money, to waste, as so many do waste, their Sunday hours. It does not become people who are perpetually complaining that they have not time enough for all that they have to do, to be spending in idle diversion, in the indulgence of their curiosity, perhaps of their dogmatic spleen, or their sectarian conceit, time that might have been better spent even in sleep.

The question then recurs, *why meet at all?* What demand does the present generation make on religion? What is the duty of religious teachers to try, at least, to do? What is the serious purpose, (for it does not become me to speak of any purpose that is not serious),—what is the serious purpose that draws us together, week after week through the busiest months of the year? Let me try to give a partial answer to this question this morning.

My subject is not the demand that religion makes on the men of this generation, but what demand the men of this generation may fairly make on religion. What have they a right to expect religion to do? What is its office at this particular juncture of time,

in this America of the nineteenth century, in this metropolitan city of the continent? What is our business here to-day? For be it remembered, we are not Europeans, but Americans, not English, but Americans, and Americans of to-day. The "good news" of no past generation is good news for us. What is my business, what is yours?

The demand that men make upon religion is not the same from age to age. It varies very much indeed,—with times and places. The original demand made upon religion, the ancient, primitive demand, was that religion should rescue men from the dominion of evil spirits. In all times and portions of the world the great figure, dreadful, appalling, has been the figure of Satan—a *personal devil*—no fiction, no dream, no creature of the imagination, no spectre conjured up by idle fancy, but the dreadfullest reality of life. He was the "prince of the powers of the air," the ruler of the "world," the king of all purely terrestrial concerns, the lord of the working life, having his share in the dominion of the material and moral universe, holding state, surrounded by his guards and satellites, sending out his edicts, issuing his commands, plotting, administering, dictating, keeping the race of men under his hand, and making successful war against the better God who sat in heaven,—a being who fairly divided the empire of the created world. This being, sometimes

seen in visible shapes personally haunting the dark places of the earth, the author of pestilence, death, famine, war, poverty, want and hunger, storm and calamity, this boding dreadful being, having his seat in every individual breast, the lord of evil desire, the instigator of passion, the "adversary," the "tempter," seeking whom he might devour, was the terror of mankind. Not a day did he rest, never for an instant did he leave the helpless and hopeless soul alone, not even in the hours of unconscious sleep, for the evil dream was his inspiration. Such was the being before whom the whole race crouched and grovelled in abject terror, and the cry was sent up to religion for rescue and protection. Come, they prayed, purge the chambers of the air; make life tolerable and decent; make it possible for men and women to fight the good fight, to walk a straight way, to plow a straight furrow through a "naughty world;" make it possible for mortals to live without shame, and die without dread; make it possible to pass the gates of death with the cheering hope that the last agony over, mortals should not go into a more extreme agony still, and be slaves of a demonic power, world without end.

This was the problem. All over the ancient world, east and west, all over Europe, Asia, Africa, went out this bitter, forlorn, desperate cry for sal-

vation. "Save my soul from the devil, from the devil in this world, from the devil in the next world, from the prince of the world, from the king of iniquity." Religion undertook the task. This is the task that for thousands of years religion toiled at, and in some measure accomplished. It hung its melodious bells in the lofty sky-piercing minarets of its churches, to disinfect the chambers of the air, so that when men clustered together to meditate and pray, the spirits might not descend upon the congregations. It built altars, kept a perpetual fire burning upon them, hung consecrated pictures and symbols in chancel and chapel, ordained priesthoods, robed them in white, draped them in splendor, and surrounded them with supernatural powers, that they might dispense to the wailing multitudes the drops of divine compassion. It built gigantic temples, which were cities within themselves, their massive walls strong enough to shut out the assailants from hell. It covered their ceilings with glowing frescoes depicting the victories of saints, apostles and martyrs, the Son of Man sitting in his glory, the virgin mother sending her benediction upon the faithful; it stained the windows with scenes of sanctity; it surrounded the very doorways with exquisite trellis work of sacred emblems, heads of angels, seraphs of wisdom, cherubs of love, countenances of saints, so that every time the mortal

passed into this building, it entered into an atmosphere of eternal glory. It took a little water from the spring, blessed it, consecrated it, put it in sacred vessels, fonts or cups, and set them up by the portal, so that every one passing into the temple might dip the finger into the healing element, and by the simplest mechanical action appropriate precious balm of the Holy Ghost.

This was the task of religion. How faithfully it was discharged for thousands of years, let us acknowledge. Let us confess it with humblest, profoundest gratitude. But this day of ours makes no such demand upon religion. We are not afraid of Satan; we have ceased to believe in his existence. The chambers of the air are disinfected by science. The astronomer goes to the uttermost confines of the solar system, and all is bathed in light. The geologist turns over the gigantic tablets of the earth, and finds no evil spirit lurking in the preadamite world. The historian examines every scrap of tradition, and the awful word Law is written on every leaf. Religion is now aware that it has no such mission to fulfill. The traveler visits the European cathedrals, marvels at their extent, admires their splendor, and wonders why they were ever built. The modern altar is painted in bright colors, and draped with flowers. No bloody sacrifices are offered any more. The services are a spectacle, a

stately, impressive show, meaning nothing. The solemn litanies are solemn to imagination only. Men and women walk through life with glad step and confident heart, without fear. That mission of religion, which consisted in checkmating Satan, was fulfilled in the old world. The Catholic church, which undertook it for Christendom, is now simply a tradition, a piece of sumptuous decoration, nothing beside.

The next demand made on religion was that it should maintain an inflexible standard of opinion. It was felt by the earliest reformers that the human mind was exposed to ignorance and error unspeakable, to wild theories, visionary dreams, to idle and misleading speculations. A revelation from God, an inspired scripture must be set up and maintained; the cry uttered was a cry for salvation for wanderers in a wilderness of thought; tell us, was the demand, tell us what we must believe; take away our doubts; deliver us from possibility of doubt; show us the truth as it is in Christ. Religion then undertook to fulfill *this* mission. It was the mission of Protestantism. Protestantism held to the inspired book. It pleaded for a divine, miraculously authenticated, supernatural revelation. It branded as demonic, devastating and spiritually ominous,heresy, infidelity materialism, atheism, as it was called. It seized and burned the teacher of evil doctrines; it put its foot

upon men like Servetus, Legate, Wightman and many thousands more in England, it is said as many as sixty thousand, thus stamping out as well as it might the seeds of error that were so ominous of a deadly future for the race. This is the work the Protestant religion undertook to do. This is the work that orthodox Christianity is undertaking to do even now. It characterizes as of evil tendency, demoralizing and destructive, the scientific, speculative, philosophising tendencies of the age.

And yet, this is not a mission, which in its heart of hearts the age is demanding that religion shall do. No one will undertake to say of course, that it is a matter of indifference what views men entertain of the world, its constitution, its ordering and governance; that it is a matter of no practical consequence whether they believe one thing or another; that, as a rule, one theory of the universe is about as good as another for the education of mankind. This is not true, certainly it is not true at present, however, it may be in the future. But neither is it true that Satan, the evil principle, the tempter, lurks in any form of opinion. I do not believe that the majority of mankind could be happy, or brave, or contented on a theory of materialism. Yet, so long as there are individual materialists, who are brave, generous, sweet, good as the best, though they may be exceedingly few in number, rare and exceptional spirits,

one here and there for whom water bubbles in this desert, so long as there are but two or three thus favored, it is demonstrated, so far, that the philosophy of materialism as such, rightly apprehended, fairly interpreted, nobly viewed and held, is not destructive of human morality, or human peace. I do not believe, that any doctrine of atheism, if freely disseminated through the communities of men and women in this generation, would be conducive to their happiness or their virtue. And yet, knowing as I do individual men and women who believe in no God, who never pray, never worship, to whom the soul of man is the finest expression of etherial matter; so long as I know this and I *do* know it; so long as the belief I have been describing, is here and there, as I am sure it is, consistent with the possession of heroism, disinterestedness, even of devotion, consecration, sweetness of sympathy, so long I should be faithless to myself if I did not declare that, in my opinion, there is nothing inherently deadly to the virtue of mankind in the theory of atheism. I am far from believing that a disbelief in the immortality of the human soul would conduce to the happiness or welfare of men and women. I cannot think so, and yet I know men and women more than one, scores of them indeed, some the sweetest, noblest, most simple hearted, most compassionate, most full of self-abnegation, thoughtful-

ness of others, forgetfulness of themselves, who anticipate for themselves no hereafter. I therefore cannot say that a disbelief in the immortality of the soul is necessarily corrupting, indispensable in all cases to human excellence. It is not. So long as it is possible for men to fulfill the utmost of which their nature is capable upon any particular theory of the world, one theory as well as another, the demand is not timely or imperative that religion shall maintain an inflexible standard of faith. On the contrary, it is perfectly safe now to let the human mind play freely upon all the chords of the intellect, to entertain all problems, to question, investigate, doubt, penetrate to the centre, as far as it can, of all speculation and to "prove all things." It is perfectly safe now for the propagandists of any theory to have freedom of utterance; nay, we may call for the fullest encouragement of thoughtfulness and research. This being so, the Protestant form of the demand on religion must be dismissed.

Because a mode of religion has done magnificently in one generation, it does not follow that it will do well in another. To have succeeded once is enough; it is a pledge that the success has been achieved, that the allotted work has been performed. Providence is satisfied. There is no living man more cordially willing than I am to give the fullest meed of praise to what the Roman Catholic church

has done in its long day. I read its history with great interest and satisfaction. I have stood in its mighty cathedrals with an overpowering sense of awe; I have lingered by its altars; I have studied its art; I can testify that it was the friend of man when man was friendless. It is on record that it lifted up those who were bowed down, that it took its stand by the side of the weak against the strong, that it represented a pure democracy in an age when kings and emperors kept the people under their feet; that it ministered to the warmest hopes of man; that it gathered up the way-worn children of humanity in its arms and nursed them. I can never forget this; I can never think without deep and tender gratitude of the way in which it placed the sweet Madonna over every temple, hung her picture over every shrine, set her image above the altar and brought poor women and forsaken girls, the tempted, the broken-hearted, the ignorant and misled, brought them to their knees before the mother of heaven, and comforted them with the thought of an infinite compassion. It does not become us, ever to say a bitter word against a faith that could do that. Heaven grant that our faith may ever be able to do anything like it. All this church has done for art, for learning, for industry, for sympathy and reconciliation, for boundless good will, let us cheerfully, more than cheerfully, let us thankfully confess it. But

does it follow that, because in the "dark ages" in the chaotic, agitated world of Europe, the church did this grand human service, does it follow that now, here in New York it can answer your questions and mine, can meet the foes of to-day, can solve the problems raised, only the day before yesterday? The very fact that it did what it did, makes it impossible to do this. It has not the tools; it does not understand the conditions; it is not master of the methods. It does not comprehend the problems. The most fragrant oil becomes rancid in a short time. The fish taken from the sea, which the epicure will pay any price for, which teases his palate with a sensation that nothing else produces, the beggar loathes after a few days. So it is with that majestic old church. Give it your admiration, your thankfulness, your cordial blessing and bid it a tender farewell.

Cannot we do justice to Protestantism and its great names,—to Martin Luther, to John Calvin, to Melancthon, to Erasmus, to the scholars who toiled over the midnight lamp, ready to give their bodies to the flames if so be that no otherwise the truth might be maintained? There was in the early periods of the Reformation a deep cry for truth. Give us a satisfying sense of divine things. No more dumb show, no more formalism, no more priest-craft, no more sacrifices on the altar; the intimate, personal

spirit union with the lord of love, that we must have.' John Calvin,— let us not only remember that he burned Servetus, let us remember the effectual reforms that he wrought,— Martin Luther — these men and their successors came forward, stood in the breach, and for three hundred years met as they could, this imperious demand. The more faithful they were and are to that call, the less their ability to deal out full justice to the problems that await us. It is no reflection upon Protestantism that it fails to meet the wants of the present generation. The more men believe in it, the more conscientious orthodox Christians are, the more incapable they must be of doing what you and I are called on to do.

It is an open secret that neither Romanism nor Protestantism meets the practical wants of to-day. The political world rolls on its course heedless of the evangelical religion. The business world toils and spins without consulting priest or Testament. It was only this last summer that a commission made up of sober, trustworthy men, Christian men by profession, sat and heard the complaints of labor. A witness on the part of the poor reads passages from the Old Testament in regard to the duties of the rich to the poor — passages of undoubted pith and point. The chairman of the committee said, quite as shortly as the case required, "We have

nothing to do with this." He *had* nothing to do with it. The Bible was out of place in the discussion. The more earnestly the chairman made his declaration, the more true was what he said. These were new questions which had just come up. The Bible has no answer to them, no solution for problems that exercise us all the days of our life. We must learn new methods, acquire the use of new tools. The questions that tear us to pieces are questions that living minds must meet and answer as well as they can, and only living minds can answer at all. The bare fact that religion, Roman and Protestant, fails to meet these new demands is no imputation upon it, for they have not failed to meet other demands of a very different sort, at the time they were made.

What are the demands, then, which the men of this generation make on religion? First of all is the requirement that religion, call itself by what name it will, using what methods it will, keep uppermost, or try to keep uppermost, the intellectual, the moral, the spiritual nature of man. Religion must be an educator, an inspirer, a quickener of natural human endeavors. In this generation it has become common to break down dividing lines between good and evil, to obliterate time-honored distinctions and to put forward as philosophy what never before has been dignified by that glorious

word. It is customary, in some quarters, to confound principle with passion, to maintain in words that principle is only another form of passion; that duty and desire are at heart the same, that love and lust are but different phases of the same emotion, that the animal nature is sacred, as being natural, nature being the warrant for all impulse. It has, we may even say, become the fashion to deify dirt. It is the duty of religion in such an emergency, call itself by what name it will, to stand for intellect, reason, conscience, sympathy, for nobleness, justice, truth, elevation, aspiration — for whatever dignifies, exalts, purifies, beautifies the individual character. The religion that shall do this, as the friend of art, literature, music, the refining influences of life, whether it be in fashion Roman Catholic or Protestant, Christian or Brahmanic, Buddhist or Mohammedan, the religion that shall do this will be the religion of the earnest portion of the age. If the Roman Catholic church, with its enormous wealth, its renown, its antiquity, its power over human conscience, its sway over human imagination, would undertake to do this work, to keep men up, purify, ennoble and exalt them, it would be once more the church of Christendom. Nothing would stand before it. It would have no competitors. I would join it to-morrow on these terms. But it cannot. History forbids. Destiny forbids. It is against the

nature of things that such an attempt should be made. It has not the implements. It cannot cherish the purpose. It cannot discard its traditions, or depart from its course. It is wedded to power; it clings to wealth; it is jealous of its dominion; it is pledged to maintain the integrity of its organization. It cannot think of undertaking new tasks. In fact, it turns the cold shoulder and must turn the cold shoulder on all who take in hand work that it declines.

If orthodox Protestantism, abandoning its attempt to support an exclusive revelation, would turn the full current of its power into this one channel of practical influence by illumination, enlightenment, refinement, the so-called "Liberal" churches would be deserted. But Protestantism cannot leave its old and well-worn track. It is committed to the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible. It cannot abandon its creeds. It must be faithful to the old dogmas. It must cling to the ancient symbols and words. It cannot be anything else than what it has been.

For this reason a religion must come forward, a new form of religion, free, open, independent, that will undertake in its own way this gigantic task. It must do what science, philosophy, education, in their way try to do, and, being a religion, it must add to this the last graceful touch of dignity, ele-

gance, refinement, purity, giving to knowledge charity, and supplementing truth by faith and hope.

One more demand is made on religion by the present generation. The need of this age is for sympathy, mutual understanding and recognition between high and low, strong and weak, great and small, rich and poor, wise and simple, good and bad,—a practical recognition of brotherhood, the acknowledgement of fellowship, the obliteration of caste, the diminution of local and sectarian prejudice, the free, open-handed, cordial admission on the part of every human being of the wants, needs of every other human being. This want, deeply felt, passionately uttered, breaks out in socialism, in communism, in the strikes and labor-unions that terrify the community. This animates the rebellion of the poor against the rich. These labor reformers owe their strength to a human feeling that flames, or is thought to flame in their breasts. All this turmoil of unrest, this clamor of want, these agonized prayers of suffering men are cries for sympathy, recognition, human support and help. The destitute seem to say: "Hold out your hand to us; make us feel that we are of the same family of God; tell us that we belong to the same race with yourselves: do not hate us; do not despise us." Nothing more than this is really asked. The *immediate* claim is on the surface. The real need is that heart-need of sympathy.

It is for religion to meet that want, for religion alone can. It alone has the sovereignty over human nature, the power to touch the depths of feeling, to stimulate purpose, to draw men away from their selfish attractions, and open to them the region of disinterested endeavor, and unconditioned love. Its symbols are the cross, which means surrender of the individual to the universal, and the cup which means the mingling of the universal with the individual. It is, besides, not the possession of the instructed, as science is, not the prerogative of the disciplined, as philosophy is, but the privilege of mankind. It appeals to the veneration of the ages. The task is for religion. Science cannot undertake it—science is engrossed by the pursuit of knowledge. Philosophy cannot attempt it—philosophy is engrossed by the effort to classify knowledge. Religion must enter on the duty. This mighty spirit, which is more than science or philosophy, of which they are the servants, friends, co-workers, but for which they cannot be substitutes, this mighty spirit which alone now has the power to stir the human heart, wake up the human conscience to heroic achievement, must break its bands and spring forth to meet a desire which has at length become articulate and imperious.

We are a common-sense people. We believe in practical things, not in theory or speculation. So-

cialism fails. Communism comes to nothing in a community like ours. It has no root. The fears entertained in the early summer of riot and uproar, attended with flame and bloodshed, proved to be unfounded. The summer went noiselessly by. There was no disturbance. No one has been killed, no property has been destroyed. There was no violence or excess. The solid, sober, common sense of the American people takes care that society shall not be overturned. We insist upon things that will work. We demand that ideas shall justify themselves by their performance. The speculations may be very fine. The visions may be very beautiful. The dreams may be splendid; but a common-sense people insist that business methods are the only methods that can be depended on, and that common sense, a "saving common sense," will carry us through any tribulation that we may be threatened with. Only let religion assume this common sense as its basis, rear upon it a lofty structure of aspiration, of moral earnestness and feeling, and once more reconciliation between this world and the next will be accomplished; once more man will cherish in peace his divinest dream; once more with steady steps he will take hold upon the eternal life.

THE DEMAND OF RELIGION ON THE AGE.

Last Sunday I spoke of the demands which the age was entitled to make and did make on religion. This morning I wish to consider the demands that religion makes on the age. There are those in modern times and in our own community, who insist that religion has no right to make any demand on the age whatever. Religion, they tell us, has had its day and a very long day; a day of power amounting to sovereignty, a day of opulence, dignity, command, honor, tribute from all mankind; a day when it has had human affairs, secular as well as spiritual, at its disposal. It has lived its life and now must give place to other powers, to philosophy, science, literature, politics, social reform, newly born Titans who claim their opportunity to dictate to men the terms of life. There is much reason in this argument, which yet as a teacher of religion I venture to combat, still pressing its claim to respect, reverence and obedience. Religion is the oldest spirit in the world; the most venerable. It has been, in its day, the teacher of art and literature yes, of philoso-

phy and of science. For philosophy and science have lain shivering babes in its cradle. It has been the benefactor of mankind in ages when they had no other friend. It has stood by the poor when they were the most abandoned. It has raised the despised when they were tottering and crushed to the earth. It proclaimed the brotherhood of man in ages that were torn with civil and social strife. It has inculcated sentiments of democracy when aristocracy wore the crown and bore the sceptre and flaunted its banners in the air, and imperalism held possession of the secular world. Hence, I maintain that this power which has swayed human conscience for thousands of years, which has had a hold on human hopes and fears such as no other power ever had or ever can hope to have, this power which has opened the gates of the future to the contemplation of mortality, which has sheltered mankind beneath convictions of a divine justice, and has consoled them by thoughts of a heavenly care, has its right still to speak, and its title to be heard. It makes its demand on the age, what is the substance of that demand?

First and foremost, from the beginning to the end, under every form of ministration, in every speech, in all tones and accents religion has demanded that man should *expand himself to the utmost measure of his nature*; should acknowledge his intrinsic great-

ness, lay aside his limitations of condition, break through his prejudices, live out of himself in universal ideas, purposes and aims. However disguised, concealed, perverted, this idea has been presented; whether it inscribed on its shield the name of Buddha, of Confucius, of Moses, of Christ or of Mahomet, whether as the duty of recovery from fall, or as the fulfillment of original destinies, this has been its demand that human nature should expand, should grow, should reach out beyond itself. What are its great words? Aspiration, worship, faith, hope. The greatest word of all, "love," is hers. This word that sounds the whole gamut of human emotion, that voices every sentiment of the human heart and touches every chord of human sensibility, word which expresses the deepest, warmest, most ecstatic feelings of heart and soul, whether among lovers on earth or angels in heaven,—this word is pre-eminently a word of religion. The word "justice," the immortal word "truth," the meaning of which has never been sounded, belongs to religion.

What are its ideas? GOD, the symbol of the "all covering heaven," studed at night with silvery stars, and watched over all day by the glorious orb of light. IMMORTALITY, a boundless future of life, and felicity perfect and eternal. These have ever been conceptions of religion—of every religion. For no religion has been so meagre and niggardly that it

would cabin and crib the human intellect or soul within any constraining definition. The definitions of religion were not meant to confine but to direct. They were designed as channels not as dams. All limitation is essentially irreligious. Not in the name of religion but in the name of some form of doubt or fear, has it been instituted. It is the offspring of dread; the product of skepticism. The dogmatists assume the responsibility of limiting the human soul. A doctrine of inspiration that shuts up the divine spirit of wisdom within the leaves of a single book, that consigns the whole word of God to the keeping of a special literature, saying this and this only is from heaven; would you know the right way, the safe way, the true way, the way that leads to felicity, you must study this volume on your knees; the doctrine that makes the classic literatures of the world, Greek, Latin, German, French, English, secondary and subordinate to the bible, a doctrine that characterizes these as the words of men, the bible as alone the word of God, is essentially irreligious. Because so far as it limits the human reason so far it confines the human soul; so far it counteracts the desire of the spiritual nature to find its highest satisfaction. Religion, therefore, demands, that the little and belittling systems shall be discarded as having had their day.

It does not follow that one cannot revere the bible,

for what is venerable in it, that one may not go so far as to call it a sacred book; all religion demands is that when men call it so they shall call all the other books that uplift, sanctify, and purify the mind—religious likewise. Whether they be prose or poetry ethical or lyrical, drama or fiction, whatever name they bear, by whatever authorship they are put forth into the world, if they do this service, if they teach, ennoble, elevate, beautify, then do they belong among the sacred, yes, the inspired scriptures. The most religious men are they who adopt literature, not they who prescribe it; they who trust reason with the bible, not they who snatch the bible from reason's hand; they who diffuse, not they who imprison the quickening life of spirit.

Do we not honor the Christ? Do we not render the fullest tribute to his moral majesty, his spiritual beauty, the loveliness of his character? But the Christs are many. There stands the immortal Buddha; there is Socrates who drank the poison and laid himself down to die without a murmur; and there is the great Mahomet, who led his people out of idolatry into the knowledge of the one God, "the compassionate, the merciful;" and all along the course of history are the great names of wise men, who, in the name of God, immortality, aspiration, worship, moral conquest, have called on men to make war over prejudice and limitation. These are the pro-

phets of religion. These are the heads upon which religion places its crown. It is then becoming in those who stand upon the ground of religion, to say to the churchmen and theologians: widen your definitions, enlarge your creeds; seek new truth; call upon science, call upon philosophy to make larger and larger contributions to the knowledge of divine things. The word of God is not bound.

This in all time is the cry of religion:

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea."

Once more, in immediate connexion with what has been said, the demand of religion is that the individual shall live worthily of himself, shall keep his reason uppermost, shall postpone passion to principle, shall exalt his highest love above his lowest, shall hunger after moral truth and greatness, shall love, seek and pursue that which ennobles and dignifies, not that which degrades his humanity. This in all time under all aspects has been the demand of religion. It has wrought in the interest of the soul.

Once more, what are its great words? Duty, consecration, disinterestedness, devotion, conscience, righteousness. What are its great types? Heroes

who have fought, prophets who have borne their witness to the truth, confessors who have been willing to wear the bloody shirt, martyrs who have gone to the stake, saviours who have been crucified in order that they might rise. What are its great supports? The men in whose honor temples have been dedicated and rites consecrated, and priesthoods ordained.

This demand of religion is austere, for religion is an austere spirit. It is no light pleasure-loving holiday thing. We are told that, many years ago, when the first great French dancer appeared in this country, two of the lights in philosophy and religion were in attendance at one of her public performances. After the execution of a specially difficult pirouette, one turned to the other and said, "this is art." "No," said the other, "this is religion." It was neither art nor religion; it was simply a display of physical vigor, a triumph of educated grace. There was no moral or spiritual quality in it; no element of goodness or greatness, of elevation, purity, or dignity. There was no suggestion of immortal beauty, nothing, in the best sense of the word, artistic. It was merely the perfection of animal form, the exuberance of creaturely power, that bewitched the senses; yet, so far were distinctions obliterated in these fervid minds that the words art, religion could be confounded with the exhibition of an acrobat.

There is in the interior of our State, in one of the cities, a church—an orthodox church—which conbines everything, not only that educates but that pleases and amuses. Its roof covers the most dissimilar things. On Sunday there is preaching in the auditorium. There are rooms for social meetings for feasting and dancing. There is a play room for children, provided with apparatus for their amusement and entertainment. There are bath-rooms, in fact there is provision for the satisfaction of the common and the uncommon, the natural and the supernatural wants of mankind. The minister argues that as religion largely interpreted, takes cognizance of all these things, is not the foe, but the friend of cleanliness and decency, of amusement and health, it must take all these under its protection; and this is true, but the relations and proportions must be observed. Different things must not be confounded, Because men are amused, are they religious? Because they are happy or clean, are they religious? Because they enjoy themselves, are they religious? Because they laugh, sing, dance, or play the violin, are they religious? Let all these things be done by all means, let them be done a thousand times more than they are, for in this sad work-a-day world, men need recreation of many kinds, still, it behooves us to remember that the spirit of religion is, as such, an austere spirit. When these have accomplished

all they can, is it any guarantee that the clean, proper, accomplished people will worship nobler things, will pursue duty with a more consecrated purpose, will long more earnestly after the spiritual life? Nay, when that great spirit, which we call religion, comes upon men, they show themselves able to postpone pleasure, to forego amusement and dispense with happiness; they can bear not to see plays, not to laugh, nor to sing. They can even endure to suffer and sorrow in the endeavor to achieve the character which dignifies and ennobles men. If this spirit of religion lifts secondary interests up, uses them, welcomes them, consecrates them to worthy services, it is well; but then they are servants not peers, its aids not its equals, and they do their best when they help on the work to which it is called.

This demand on our age is one that is easily forgotten. The favorite word of our time is happiness. The foremost desire of our time is to be amused, to have pleasant experiences. The aspiration of our time, if aspiration it can be called, is that all may be sleek and smooth, that the velvet path of dalliance may be open before the feet and that thorns and briars be weeded out. The kingdom of heaven has degenerated into a "summer land," which is reached by no toilsome road, but by the inevitable dispensation of death. Yet, the old wisdom is as wise as it ever was. There is no royal road to

felicity. Moral grandeur is not an accident, but an achievment. They who would be great, they who would attain to dignity and sweetness of nature must at times walk through thorn tracts, and tread upon heated plowshares, seeing before them no summer but a land where heroes, reformers and saints have meekly trod, which, if it be smooth, has been made so by bleeding feet. Smooth it may be, but it is not soft with grass or flowers.

Once more, a demand that religion has always made on the world is that the sentiment of brotherhood should be cherished and cultivated; the idea of brotherhood, of kindred on the spiritual plane, the belief that all men are the children of the same father, that life is essentially the same discipline for all, that as all enter the world through the same portal and through the same portal go out of it, so for all, life's experience is in substance the same, life's experiment similar in its issues, the world a school in which the mind of man must be trained by difficulty and struggle, if so be that progress may ensue from it. Remembering this, religion in all ages, has preached compassion, sympathy, fellow feeling, pity, tenderness. It has told the great that they were great in order that they might help the small. It has bidden the rich to bear in mind their stewardship, to remember that they were rich in order that they might bless the poor. It has urged

on the wise the lesson of service to the simple, reminding them that as the poor and toiling labor that they may have bread, they should labor to give in return light, life and immortality. The sentiment of sympathy is not altogether in accordance with the spirit of our age. The spirit of the age is commercial, and the commercial spirit is not a spirit of brotherhood, but a spirit of competition. Its animating temper is passion for gain; its method is rivalry. It does indeed seek to establish intercourse between the tribes of men and the remote parts of earth. It brings races together; it opens a way through mountain ranges; it makes the ocean a connecting link instead of a barrier; it forms compacts and leagues for the common advantage. But this it does not in the interest of brotherhood, but in the service of wealth, wealth of the capitalist, the manufacturer, the merchant. Chicanery, pillage, rapine, war are not infrequently its accompaniments, its agents. It will desolate this region that it may refresh that; incidentally it arouses jealousies, foments discords, disturbs kind feeling. However indirectly it may promote fraternity, directly it tends to stir up strife which religion is called on to heal.

Its voice has never been inarticulate. I could read you verses, golden words from any scripture of any age in the world, all to the same purpose, all emphatic, all earnest, all imperative on

this point. There is no bible ancient or modern, Asiatic or European, however full of formalities, externalities, superstitions, that does not contain chapter on chapter devoted to this doctrine of charity, of equity, consideration, love. Do not fasten upon the doctrine the abuses that it has been made to countenance. Religion oftener speaks out of the heart than out of the judgment. I admit that sentimental charity, born of emotion, the philanthrophy of imagination, has been a great evil, and even a curse to the world. I admit that the doctrine of charity as taught in the bible, old testament and new, the doctrine that the disciple must sell all he has and give to the poor in anticipation of treasures in heaven, must give tithes of all he possesses, may be and has been injurious to mankind. Nay, standing here as a teacher of religion, I venture to affirm that the doctrine of alms giving, so earnestly and unremittingly and uncompromisingly preached by Jesus himself, the doctrine of the sermon on the Mount is open to this objection; that the new testament, if taken literally at its word and rigidly applied, would be fatal to any reasonable or just distribution of human affairs, and weakening to human character. The doctrine of the new testament, however, is not the teaching of religion in its broad human tendency. It is local and occasional rather than universal. It is the doctrine of a peculiar

epoch, a special crisis in Hebrew affairs. It was promulgated under stress of historical emergency, and was addressed to people in certain conditions of life; not a universal doctrine, therefore, not human in the proper sense of the word. The doctrine of Moses was suitable to the age and exigencies of Moses, the organizer of a race. The doctrine of Jesus was suitable to a generation that expected the world to come to an end, and a new order to be imminent. The doctrine of Paul was based on a similar anticipation. That expectation has passed. No convocation of clergy will be able to revive it. We live in a new world, under a new system, and we cannot afford in the name of religion, to take even from these books, or from holiest lips, words however venerable and sweet from association, and make them the guides of conduct in a matter so vital as this. They may give us inspiration, direction they cannot give. Grant that science recoils too abruptly from the sentimental view; still its recoil is reasonable. Science says "help has been overdone, love enfeebles and demoralizes." The word "sympathy" ought never more to be spoken as a word of authority. Men must learn to help themselves, must take their chance and earn the title to live. The "survival of the fittest" is the doctrine that most commends itself to the economsist of the new world. The fittest! that is perchance

according to the vulgar apprehension, the strongest, the most energetic, the most enduring, the most pushing and persistent, shall we say, speaking for the more brutal class, the most heartless, the most unsympathetic, the most violent and unscrupulous who rely on force without justice and cunning without wisdom? There are those who put this practical interpretation on the doctrine. It was but the other day that one said to me, speaking of the suffering and horror at the South from the yellow fever: "It serves them right; they should have learned how to drain their towns. They should not drink impure water; they should not breathe tainted air; they should not build on malarious soil." But how many of us are wise enough to abstain from unwholesome practices, even when we know them to be unwholesome? And how many are there, even in communities called enlightened, who know what is unwholesome, and what is not? The knowledge of sanitary conditions is even yet confined to the few in the centres of modern civilization. How could those poor people at the South, upon whom pestilence suddenly sweeps down with its wings of death—how could they have known that it was coming? How could they have provided the way of escape? How could they have secured themselves against its assaults? Pity goes in advance of intelligence. Love anticipates light. Over and above

the domain of knowledge there is scope and demand for endless compassion and helpfulness. Religion, pure and reasonable religion, takes the middle ground, reconciling love and light. Religion says "do what you can, but what you do, do wisely. Be careful how you demoralize, break down or weaken a single human will. Build people up; teach them to build themselves up. Diffuse knowledge, get more knowledge to diffuse. But always remember that the suffering, sick, weak creature is your brother, none the less so for being ignorant. Remember, "the quality of mercy is not strained. It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes. 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest. It becomes the throned monarch, better than his crown, and human power, does then seem likest God's, when mercy seasons justice." This is the voice of religion; always will be, always must be to the end of time. Religion stands and cries:

Children of men! the unseen Power, whose eye
Forever doth accompany mankind,
Hath look'd on no religion scornfully
That men did ever find.

Which has not taught weak wills, how much they can?
Which has not fall'n on the dry heart like rain?
Which has not cried to sunk self-weary man;
Thou must be born again?

Children of men! not that your age excel,
In pride of life the ages of your sires,
But that ye think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well
The Friend of man desires.

THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF BELIEF IN GOD.

I announce for my subject this morning the practical value of the faith in God; the *practical* value of the faith in God. The belief in God is assumed as a cardinal and all but universal faith of mankind. The speculative side of the question therefore I have no intention even of touching. Let that stand; the practical aspect of the question is that which I ask you to consider. The idea of God fills the imagination of man. Vague, indefinite, unintelligible, for these reasons it stands for all that is great and glorious, all that is majestic and lovely. In the material world it describes force that is omnipotent, law that never changes, the primal and efficient cause, wisdom that guides without faltering, providence that watches, superintends, overrules and binds all things together in a consistent order. In the moral world it stands for perfect justice, absolute truth, kindness that is without compromise, and love that cannot be grieved or prayed away. To the spiritual imagination it stands

for the perfection of beauty, for whatever is excellent and adorable, the absolute, the infinite, the eternal; for all that fascinates and overawes the soul of the world. Thus the conception gleams before the imagination of man, enchanting, enticing, commanding, swaying, whether he will or not.

When we pass from the *idea* to the *doctrine* a lamentable change comes over the whole conception. While the idea fills the imagination, the doctrine empties it. The idea dwarfs intelligence, the doctrine affronts it. No theory or dogma of God does anything but outrage reason. In the material world it represents God not as law, but as the supreme violator of law, not as the pledge of constancy, but as the author of miracle, not as inexhaustible creative energy, but as an external will which exerts itself to baffle, defeat, suspend, overrule and break up the systematic course and tendency of nature. In the moral world the doctrine represents God, not as the perfect equity, but as the absolute willfulness, not as a universal spirit of justice, but as a capricious ruler, who issues his individual decree, and pronounces, without reference to human standards of right and wrong, a final sentence, deciding what shall be and what shall not be. In the spiritual world, the world of feeling, the doctrine represents God, not as the infinite majesty, but as the infinite will; not as the serene creative wisdom,

but as an individual who baffles emotion, hinders, teases and perplexes the intelligent worship of men; not as the perfect beauty, but as a clouded, shaded and questionable loveliness, majestic, but awful, glorious but grim and mysterious; a divided being, part of whom is in Heaven, part of whom is in Hell, whose attributes shade off into the demonic, shared by devils, as well as by angels; a being to be crouched before, dreaded, shrunk from, and crawled towards on the knees.

Such grotesque forms of thought furnish the occasion which atheism seizes for its deadliest assault. This is the provocative of atheism. For the atheist, whatever be his particular theory, whatever his special pretext, fastens his fangs upon the *dogma*, not upon the *idea;* upon the *definition*, not upon the *vision*. Atheism quarrels with men's *thoughts of deity*, not with their *aspiration toward deity*. There may be atheists, here and there, two or three in Christendom, who will not hear the name of God spoken, who discard the very imagination of God, who call themselves *Nihilists;* but of atheism as a rule it must be said that its hatred is of the dogma, not of the idea. Speak of law, harmony, order, tendency and effort towards progress in the world, atheism admits that. If atheism takes God out of Heaven, it puts him into the breast of man, or infuses him into the system of the universe. It

does not abolish or eradicate Him. Lay aside the arbitrary limitations of the dogma, and atheism, the popular atheism, is disarmed. Thence it would seem that the point of real moment is practical, rather than speculative, for only as it is practical can atheism be considered dangerous.

The practical value of this deathless belief, what then is it worth? As a *mere* belief little or nothing. As a spiritual faith, as a belief of conscience and the heart, probably much, nay, I had almost said everything. To great multitudes of men it is priceless. Let us look at it in three aspects, first, as it concerns the individual life; next, as it bears upon our political institutions, and third, as it affects our social state.

What is the value of a belief in God as it affects individual character? This is the first point. The problem before us is this: how we shall keep character uppermost; how we shall maintain inviolate the integrity of the moral law; how we shall be virtuous, patient, constant, sweet and good. This is the problem, and for its solution the idea of God has its value. As I look abroad upon the world, it seems to me that the chief thing needed is a fixed standard, a feeling, a conviction that truth is riveted to something permanent; that goodness has a divine sanction; that justice is no private notion, no whim born of temperament or circumstance; no

conceit; no result of shrewd calculation of chances; no product of balanced experiences; but a primeval principle, a deathless reality, part and parcel of the organic structure of the moral world. It seems to me, living in a world like ours, a world of perplexity, distress, fear and intellectual bewilderment, that there is a necessity for men to hold fast a belief that justice is adamantine and eternal. Faith in God assists this endeavor. It is useful to remember how our forefathers spoke of conscience. It was to them as the voice of God in the soul. Duty was to them an expression of the will of God; obligation was the binding law of God; responsibility the direct command of God. They associated the sentiments and virtues of personal character with the conception of an eternal law. But mark how men now speak of duty and responsibility and conscience; notice how they put these great interests at the mercy of casuistry, of impulse or of passion. Within the year there has scarcely been an instance of personal disloyalty, domestic infidelity, public betrayal of trust, private dishonor or official disgrace, that has not been explained, apologized for, justified perhaps, pushed away into the dark, excused on some skillfully contrived legerdemain of logic, which was bent on concealment or evasion, craftily plied to make the worse appear the better reason.

An enormous amount of subtlety is expended in

law courts, public journals and private discussion, on efforts to resolve the substance of rectitude, honor, truth, into diverse forms of pardonable selfishness, natural mistake, constitutional weakness, and even laudable ambition.

There are the doctrines that man is the creature of circumstance; that man is the victim of inherited qualities; the doctrine of happiness; the doctrine of the divine legitimacy of passion, which, one and all tend to undermine and demoralize the personal character. To this result casuistry tends. The logical subtlety is in the pay of impulse, unreason and instinct. Its tendency is to pull down the pillars that support the moral faith of the world. It easily gets to be doubted under its cunning persuasions, whether there be such a thing as moral obligation; whether duty or right be more than solemn traditions; whether a man may not lawfully consult what on the whole seems wisest, most profitable, most agreeable for himself. It is to be remarked that on this theory the lower man always takes the initiative, the man who is bent upon gratifying his desire, satisfying his rage to be rich, powerful, famous, sumptuous, feeding his appetite for some kind of selfish supremacy over his fellows. Casuistry works in the interest of discord, disintegration, moral inferiority. Hence the necessity of a fixed standard that cannot be pulled to pieces, or scorned

or flouted; a conviction, solid and deep, which idle skepticism shall not question, but which simple faith may fall back upon and obey.

I do not say that at the bottom, to the fine calm philosophical view, the standard of duty is not purely rational. I do not challenge the utilitarianism of enlightened and earnest minds. I do not deny that at the last analysis reason is to determine whether a thing be right or wrong, *wisdom* not tradition, prejudice or authority; still, living as we do in a passionate hot world, how many of us are calm, serene or philosophical? how many go into the closet of meditation, bring the question before the reason, and solve the actual problem of duty by the highest attainable wisdom? It is impulse, passion, desire, the hot instinct of the moment that carries the multitude away, and the intellect, keen, questioning, sagacious is at the mercy of these persuasive sirens. To palter is to yield. Hence, for the stability of personal character, it is useful, to say the least, that the idea of duty should be perfectly simple, removed far from the seductive influences of casuistry, made identical with a sovereign will, with the absolute supreme will of the world, and as such meekly obeyed.

Now look at the matter politically. What is the problem before us as Americans? It is to establish a government upon firm foundations of human

equity; a purely republican government, a government popular, but stable. We, for the first time in history are trying this vast experiment, under difficulties which however they may have been insisted on, never yet have been fully estimated. In the face of intellectual, political, social influences we are summoned to conduct this delicate experiment. How are we to meet it?

It is a curious historical fact, that the great founders of democratic institutions have been Theists, believers in God. I do not, and have not been able to recollect the name of a single great statesman, leader or founder, who was an atheist. Moses, the institutor of the Republic of Israel, a man only traditions of whom have survived, but all the traditions of whom are fraught with majestic determination, and have left a mark of power on the destinies of a race, was simply and only a theist. The idea that sustained and inspired him was the idea of God. The belief in the immortality of the soul he would not use; nothing but the idea of God was precious. Relying on the potency of that idea, he pronounced the slaves free, raised woman to the level of man. He is the reputed emancipator of labor; the foe to monopoly of the soil. He obliterated the common distinction between classes and ranks. He enjoined universal duties. His laws were severe against the infringement of personal rights. And his authority

was the commission of Jehovah. Cromwell, one of the great names, perhaps the greatest name in English history, a man even yet imperfectly understood, owed his power over himself and his generation to his faith in a real, immanent God, who had chosen him for his work. It was in the name of deity that he took his stand as a ruler, devoted himself as a reformer, ruled, instituted and builded. His rod, you say, was a rod of iron. He was a tremendous will, overbearing and cruel. Yes, that was because he defined God wrongly, but the *idea* of God as it came to his conscience, inflamed his heart, lifted up his soul, was full of invigoration and inspiration. His Calvinism overlaid his Theism, and made him a fanatic. Pure Theism would have made him simply great. Washington, one of the greatest names in modern history, was purely, wholly a theist. Nominally he belonged to the Episcopal church. Apparently he was a "Christian," but in his heart of hearts, at the core of his reason, as he lived, wrought, conquered, Washington had but one article of faith, and that was faith in a Supreme will. He believed in the destiny of the American people, he believed in justice, he believed in law. So intensely, so profoundly did he cherish this belief, that he was able to take the ground—amazing at that era of the world, amazing now in fact, that an equal justice was to be extended to men of all nationalities,

whatever their creeds, whether in Christendom or out of it, all local, occasional prejudices yielding to the universal principle of equity. The great Republic must abide by the Supreme law, must keep faith with the men of Tunis, or it abrogated its allegiance. Abraham Lincoln, the man of sorrows, owed his strength, his patience, his forbearance, his serenity to this broad faith. The heroic Mazzini, one of those sainted names that we can scarcely pronounce without tears, a man of utmost liberality of mind, protesting with all his might against every intellectual limitation, warned, prayed, begged his countrymen, not to lose their faith in the absolute and the eternal, for said he, If you lose that, you lose the guarantee of moral power. Emilio Castelar, the eloquent Spaniard, who in these later years has been promulgating his gospel of freedom and progress over Spain and Europe, cherished this idea first and foremost while many another idea was dismissed. He belonged to no church. He recited no creed. He made no confession. He repeated no liturgy. He was purely and only a theist of the most ideal description, but a theist he was, so convinced, so glowing, so earnest that he could scarcely think of anything else when he was preaching his word.

These certainly are significant facts. That no permanent state has ever been founded on repub-

lican principles unless it was founded on some basis of Theism, is certainly remarkable. The explanation is at hand. Romanism has never been able to found a republic. It is the boast of modern Romanism that it can accommodate itself to any form of government. If Romanism should undertake to create a state on its peculiar principles, it would be a monarchy; it would be despotism. It can live in a republic because in a republic all religions stand on a footing of equal rights; all have the same opportunity for maintaining their institutions and promulgating their dogmas. But Romanism is incapable of founding a republic for the reason that it is, by its own constitution, a despotism. Its head claims to be higher than monarchs, a representative of the King of Kings. It is governed by a hierarchy. It assumes to be sole receptacle of a divine revelation. It believes in absolute submission to authority. Out of the church there is no salvation, is the first article of its creed. No republic therefore is possible under Romanism. It is subversive of republican forms; a perpetual source of danger. Protestantism never could found a republic for this reason, that the cardinal idea of Protestantism is that none but the elect are saved. The saints are to rule the world, not the sinners, and the unbelievers are sinners. Protestantism therefore must admit as the cardinal part of its

creed that certain men are to be subject to certain other men. That there is no such thing as simple equality of rights or privileges under such a system is evident. If the Christ, who is all in all, is nestling in the heart of the creed, then those who do not accept the creed are subject, and can logically have no voice.

Atheism, as commonly interpreted, cannot form a republic, for the reason that atheism throws men back upon individual determinations. A cardinal belief of the currently professed atheism, taking atheism literally at its word is, *the survival of the fittest*, the doctrine that the strong may rule the weak, the rich may own the poor, the wise may control the simple, the crafty may make subjects of the helpless. Hence the doctrine of the survival of the fittest comes naturally to those who entertain a materialistic theory of the world. Natural force is the object of their adoration.

And why does Theism suggest a republic? Simply because it grounds all rights in the absolute and supreme will, which need not be personal, but must be binding. All men, all women, all rational beings have on this principle the same rights, the same duties, because they have their roots in the same intelligent reason, in the same moral justice. The root of citizenship is in all identical. The slave is free; woman is raised to the same rational level

with man; the poor are fellow citizens of the rich; the weak have the same rights with the strong, and are entitled to the same consideration. Therefore the postulate of Theism once understood and accepted, we are compelled to lift up all who have been bowed down, to equalize political conditions, disregarding all diversities, and resting in pure humanity. The Hebrew State, inspired by a strong Theism, allowed to women a place that no modern state concedes. A law, promulgated in the name of the Lord, decreed that debts should be canceled after a certain lapse of time; that slaves should be emancipated after so many years of service; that the land should not be held by individual owners in perpetual possession. Attempts were made to smoothe away the mountains of inequality that time accumulates, and to restore the condition of brotherhood in the Lord, which characterizes Theism. However much republican institutions may have differed here and there on incidental points, on certain cardinal points they have always tended toward unity, the humane adjustment of civil conditions.

Finally, I ask you to consider the practical value of belief in God in view of the requirements of human society. The problem before modern society is this, how to create a condition of things in which men and women, rational creatures, may live and work, suffer and enjoy, in peace, harmony and

good will, with mutual sympathy and helpfulness; not tearing each other to pieces, not crushing each other to the earth, but in mutual co-operation and compassion woven together by common bands of responsibility in a union of equity, if not of love. In a state of nature no such condition as this is found; you do not come across it in the animal or insect world. There the struggle for existence goes ruthlessly on. There the rule is force without justice. An indiscriminate ravage characterizes the world of nature. As John Stuart Mill has so powerfully and eloquently set it forth in one of his essays, if we are to copy nature, we must discard what is most admirable in humanity. For "nature red in tooth and claw with ravine shrieks against the creed" of love. In the insect world, there is no delight of kindness or good will. Incessant hunting, oppression, enslavement, murder, is characteristic of its phenomena. Our inhumanities have their root there. The ants practice slavery and war, the strong ruling the weak, the lords disposing of the subjects. The weak lion yields up his blood to the powerful. When a herd of buffaloes rush wildly across the prairie, if one of them is wounded by a dart the rest turn upon him tear him to pieces, drink his blood and sweep on. When the pack of dogs tears across a meadow, if one of them limps the others stop just long enough to relieve

themselves of the incumbrance. Then they go on.

What is the history of the savage world? The savage is a wolf. Barbarism, perpetual violence, craft, treachery, a flowing stream of blood, that never dries up and never becomes shallow, a worship of brute power characterize the stages that precede civilization. Weakness may dig, slave, rot and grub in the ground; the man of might rules; man subjects woman; the cruel oppress the gentle; the high crush the low. There are those who congratulate themselves that a different state of things prevails in modern society. Does it? Answer, you men who, day after day, go down into the lowest places of New York to earn money; say, is the rule one of justice, equity, fraternity, consideration, kindness, love? The rule of barbarism, the rule of the savage prevails.

But this is wrong. We wish to abolish this. Our endeavor is or should be to build up a human society on principles of justice, mutual consideration, bearance and forbearance. We have the sentiment of it established in our bosoms. In all good hearts there is a feeling that society ought to give expression in laws and institutions to these sentiments. How shall this be accomplished? Some help towards such a consummation may be derived, may it not, from the faith in a universal Father, whose care over all the world is absolute and unfailing.

Behind the mask, the pageant and parade of phenomena, a deep-seated purpose, a direction and tendency to order, the heart of which is just, good, and even tender may be descried. All mankind are members of a family; all are little children, stupid and blind, falling and stumbling, making their way painfully over ruins, towards something greater and more glorious than even imagination entertained. Given this idea that all are children of the same Father, that all have the same original parentage, that all share the same ultimate destiny, that all are set to work out issues that are hidden in a remote future, and the secret is furnished of the social mystery. Let this be granted; let this be heartily believed, and it will be simply an impossibility to grind humanity to the earth, to go on cheating and stealing, lying and subjugating. A sentiment of accountability, of mutual fealty and loyalty, of kindness, even of sacrifice will take possession of men, and society will gradually, around this great idea, form itself into the image of what society should be. Then, but not till then; for thus far the sentiment of brotherhood is associated with some form of the faith in God.

Let not my argument be misconstrued; I do not maintain or hold that things are to be believed simply because they seem to work well, that any particular belief may be entertained because we think

it important to individuals or to society. That is exceedingly dangerous ground to take. A more dangerous position than that could not be assumed. It erects a fancied expediency into the criterion of truth. Any superstition, any monstrous piece of infatuation can justify itself on that ground. Romanism itself, the most pretentions of superstitions, relies on this argument. The Roman Church declares that its institutions are of the utmost importance to the welfare and stability of society, and on that ground demands belief in its dogma and submission to its authority.

Even were the fact as it asserts the conclusion would not follow, for there is a growing question of truth. If a doctrine be not *true*, no expediency will commend it. The expediency itself must be questioned. It never can be wise to entertain lies. Dishonesty is never the best policy. It is not an easy thing to tell what the practical effects of any theory may be: and they cannot on the whole be good, if the theory be false. The first question, therefore, is whether a doctrine be true; whether it can maintain itself before the bar of reason. If the doctrine of Theism rationally explained, cannot do this, then dismiss it. Let us frankly and honorably let it go, let us profess that we are not theists; that we do not believe in God. But things are very far indeed from having come to this pass. There are those who disbelieve in God, a

few, probably not more than a score or so of thinking people, who clearly and firmly without reservation, or evasion, discard the very substance of the idea. A disbelief in deity, intellectual, moral, spiritual, in deity of all kinds is rare. The substance of the belief though not the form of it remains, and it will remain for many and many a generation yet, to gladden and strengthen the world. Earnest men, the most earnest men are thus far the most earnest believers.

Yes, it is a lawful persuasion that though the idea may drop form after form, though every known definition of it may be discarded, though the dogma may be dismissed entirely, the substance of the faith, the heart, the core of it will remain, and will go on from strength to strength, from glory to glory.

The practical value of the belief in God does not depend on the intellectual form which the belief may assume. The character of the influence exerted by it will be modified greatly by the fashion of the faith. The intense personal conviction of the Hebrew prophets, resting on the apprehension of an individual, instant, inspiring, controlling, ruling Jehovah, imparted to them a peculiar moral assurance, directness, positiveness and force. The persuasion of the English Puritans,—the persuasion which possessed Cromwell,—that a personal, foreordaining will shaped the destinies of nations and individuals,

resulted in a fierce self-assertion which amounted to fanaticism, and issued in despotism and blood. As the faith becomes more sectional in its basis and more reasonable in its character, its influence becomes less violent without becoming less invigorating. Between Moses and Mazzini, between Cromwell and Castelar, the speculative distance is simply immeasurable. Moses would have called Mazzini an atheist, and Cromwell would have looked on Castelar as an attenuated visionary. In the eyes of Mazzini, Moses may have seemed a bigot; in the judgment of Castelar, Cromwell may look like a fanatic. We know how the "God-intoxicated" Spinoza was regarded by the orthodox Theists of his race and time. How Herbert Spencer regards the anthropomorphic Theism of the modern English may be learned from his writings. Yet the heroic truthfulness of Spinoza is the confusion of those who would fain think Pantheism a system fatal to moral earnestness; and the sweet purity and utter sincerity of Herbert Spencer are confessed by those who would be glad to be assured that a Theism so shadowy as his cannot be impressive. The fact is, that the faith in God is more nobly and beautifully operative in proportion as it is purged and purified of superstition. The most sublimated Theism is the most exalting to the conscience, the most enchanting to the heart. The less God stands

for an individual, the more he is felt as a Being. The substance of the faith in him, as a practical power, consists in the gathering up, accumulating, condensing, solemnizing the sentiments and emotions which, in ordinary minds, float vague and aimless, at the mercy of passion and caprice. However such a result may be secured, the ennobling effect follows. The "Religion of Humanity," which substitutes the consolidated human race, the "Grand Man," for deity, may secure the same end, and does secure it in the case of its most intelligent and earnest disciples, in the old world and the new. These, without exception, as I believe, are humble, consecrated men, who live for others, not for themselves, subordinate the lower nature to the higher, are lovers of rational law and rational liberty, and are fellow workers at the task of redeeming society from its evils. They surpass in their allegiance to overruling principle, in singleness of devotion to humane ends, the consciencious professors of the popular faith. They, indeed, are the most consecrated to universal objects of any in this generation.

Thus we see that the idea is everything, the form comparatively unimportant. Evidences may be rejected; "demonstrations" may be set aside as worthless; arguments may be answered; conceptions may fade away to shadows; the belief in God

may become attenuated to the last degree, so attenuated that the "Awful Name" may be, as with some it is, merely a symbol of moral and spiritual entities, a "category of the ideal," as Renan calls it; still, even then, it will carry with it associations of authority and sanctity; even then it will lend power to the flickering will and steadiness to the fluttering aspirations of man.

THE REAL GOD.

My subject this morning is the real God, or in other words the reality of God, and my design is, if possible, to show in what sense God may be, to us, a reality, a real force or being, a "living God." My object is not to discourse of the gods which are actual and real to men, for then I must speak of pleasure, of wealth and fame, of success and victory, for these are the deities that men truly and daily worship. There is an everlasting difference between the deity that is professed, and the God that is adored, between the God that we write the name of in our creed, and the God that we worship in our hearts, between the God of theology and the God of life. Many a man's God is the very opposite of what he says it is. He will talk to you about his deity, will define it, and describe it in well considered terms, will tell you how it differs from the deity held by his neighbors; but follow the course of the man's life, consult the drift of his motives and im-

pulses, see what it is that sways his desire, and you will find that it is some mean thing, some idle groveling passion that he would be shocked at if it was fairly presented to him.

I spoke last Sunday of the practical value of a faith in God. Now we must never forget that no faith has a great practical value that is not in some sense real. The faith in God must be real, if it is to prevail. The popular faith *is* real. The mass of mankind truly believe in a living, operative, personal deity. They can not speak intelligently of him; they can not define him; they can not give reasons for the faith that is in them; they can follow no line of argument in demonstration of his existence; but yet there is an instinctive, awful feeling of his actual presence in the world, which controls, regulates, and predetermines human life. That this is so, need not be argued. It is too evident to be doubted. Go among simple men and women of all classes; search the by-ways of life, and you will find a steadfast simplicity of goodness, sincerity, honesty, and veracity which can be accounted for not on the theory of intuitive knowledge, not on the theory of an instinctive faith in God, but as a sense, a feeling, an impression that outside of themselves, outside of the working world, there is a power which thinks, feels, purposes, and impels the world towards certain ends of its own. God becomes unreal when

life ceases to be simple; when men, engaged in business, completely absorbed in terrestial affairs, lose the sense of mystery that embosoms and exalts human life; or, it may be, when they are engaged in intellectual pursuits, in the study of science, or literature; then, engrossed in themselves, interested in the working of their own minds, they forget the overarching reality that holds them and everything in its place. The unreality of God haunts the working mind. You find it in cities, where men are busy with their own affairs. You do not find it in the country, where men are natural, thoughtless of themselves, and earnest in their service of others, where they lay aside their vanity and conceit.

Men in all ages have insisted on having not a speculative, but a living God. The evidences of this are before us. Superstition, that grim, gaunt, awful thing that we speak of, sometimes in the language of horror, sometimes in terms of contempt, is, when duly examined, an effort to realize God, to make divine things palpable, tangible, to give them a local habitation and a name. Superstition takes its color from the mind that entertains it, from the fears or hopes, the hates or loves that see a horrible ugliness, or an immortal beauty in the immediate world of matter. Sometimes it is horrible, as in India, sometimes it is lovely, as in Greece, but, whether hideous or charming, it is an attempt to

detain the fugitive spirit of the law that bathes and governs the world. All men are superstitious. All people are superstitious, and they will be, to a certain extent, to the end of time; for superstition, shading off in infinite degrees as it does, reaches the lowest, but does not leave the highest intelligence.

Idolatry is another effort to realize or make palpable divine powers; to make God an actual, living being. The world is full of idols, horrible idols, some of them ghastly, stained with blood, but all in their way symbolical. The deities of Greece were idols, none the less for being models of beauty to all time. The image which one sets up in his mind when he undertakes to conceive of deity is an idol. It cannot be seen or touched, still it has its outline to the thought; it is palpable to the intellectual apprehension. The real secret of idolatry is doubtless this, that the idol expresses what the unaided mind cannot grasp. The idolator does not necessarily worship the image; he adores the idea behind the image. At last, perhaps, he comes to worship the image, but only at last. This he did in Pagan times. This he does in Christian times. The ordinary Catholic worships the picture of the Virgin as devoutly as the ordinary Greek or Roman worshipped his block of stone. The intelligent Catholic sees the spirit behind the picture and bends before that.

The Ark of the Covenant, which we read of in

the Old Testament, was a symbol intended to localize deity. If we know anything about the deity of the early Hebrews, and I confess we know very little, perhaps nothing at all, that conception, without regard to its date, was the purest, the noblest, the highest ideal on the whole that has ever been entertained by any considerable number of the human family, a highly intellectual conception of a deity without form or substance, having no abiding place, fashioned after the image of no created thing, whether orb of Heaven, or monster of the deep, beast, insect, man, creeping thing, or imaginary being, offspring of fear or fancy. But it has never been possible for a race of men for any length of time, to entertain an intellectual conception of deity. The Ark of the Covenant was an attempt as innocent as could be made to localize and domesticate the impalpable. It was a wooden box, of ordinary fashion and regular dimensions, furnished with conveniences for handling and carriage, all but devoid of ornament; yet the people became accustomed to look upon it as a divine symbol. Where it was, there was Jehovah; where it went, there Jehovah went. In the course of time, the lowest, the vulgarest superstition gathered upon it. To lose it was to lose the support of deity; to possess it was to have the living deity in the midst of the people.

Pass now to the Christian doctrine of Incarnation.

That again was an attempt to realize the God-head, to take the divine being out of the vast bleak spaces of the heavens and make him a man. The Christ was "God with us," Emanuel; he was the Word become a man, the whole of deity in the human form, walking about in the streets of cities, sitting at meat in human dwellings, talking with men and women as a friend, sympathizing with them in their sorrow curing their diseases, raising up their dead. This was the thought that gave vitality to the early church. Around this central conception the modern church gathers. The jealousy that the trinitarian even to-day has of the unitarian is founded upon this belief that the incarnation must contain the *whole* of God. The Christ must be verily God with us, not an archangel, not a spiritual creature of even the highest rank, but the infinite, the omnipresent, the omniscient, the perfect wisdom and love, the Fullness, the All in All,—this, nothing else, and nothing less; the trinitarian charges the unitarian with dividing the godhead, letting the divine essence depart and become once more a film in the air. There is no longer he says a real deity. There is no longer a living, working, operative being. The most popular of our living preachers said in substance: Christ is my God; him I believe in, him I pray to; the other God, the absolute, the ideal, the infinite is a mist in the air.

The Roman Catholic church did its best to realize God in the sacraments. The sacraments were channels of grace by means of which the individual believer appropriated, by the touch, the taste, in drops of water, in the consecrated wafer, through the holy hands of the priest, the regenerating lord. The drops of water in baptism, were supposed to convey the protecting God. In confirmation, the rite by which the mortal connected himself with the church, was an electric bond by which helpless individuals became sharers in the life of the eternal. The church was the living, instituted, domesticated deity. In the communion the participant took the consecrated wafer, which was regarded as the very body of Christ himself, and eating it appropriated the substantiated deity. In extreme unction, in absolution, deity was supposed to trickle from the finger ends of the priest. The words he spoke were the reasoning of the almighty; the individual touched God. This was the mystery of the mass, how a breaden God could be a real one. To the mutitude no other *was* real; the multitude could worship no deity they could not swallow.

Turn to Protestantism; the eternal God, the God of whom law, justice, truth, endless beauty are the suggestive names and the spiritual substance, is to Protestants nothing. He must be a *real* God, and to make God real there is the conceded necessity that

He become tangible. The Protestant therefore clings to baptism, in the belief that the consecrated drops of water, convey to the individual the regenerating spirit of heaven. He prizes the communion bread and wine, the elements of the supper being consecrated by the priest before eaten. The Bible to the Protestant is the portable God, a deity he can put in his pocket, lock up in his trunk, carry about with him on journeys, a divinity he can find lying on the centre table, can take up and appropriate by the eye as occasion may serve. You see him in the saloons of the steamboats; you come upon him in the chamber of the hotel. Everywhere the effort is to place the idolized book, the printed, bound enleathered deity within the easy reach of men and women. That is the sanctifying thing, to read the Bible, to read it devotedly, to read it on the knees. That is sacramental. That is immediate communication with the all quickening love.

The last made effort to realize deity is disclosed in the proposition to incorporate his name in the Constitution of the United States. There seems to be somewhere a notion that if we can but vote ourselves a God-fearing people we shall be so; that if we can contrive to get written as a philactery on the forehead of our nationality, the ineffable name, an ineffable power will there upon take possession of us, sanctify us, sweeten us, and bear us on to national

victory. Such an idea could be entertained only by people who have for generations on generations been trying to incorporate God in some system or institution; to make him local; people who have believed in incarnating marble, canvass, paper; in fetishes and idols; in symbols and signs; in figures of speech and gestures of the body. No intellectual people, no rational people would ever think of such a thing. Put the name of God into the Constitution! Why Philip II, of Spain, did that, and was not saved thereby from the misfortune of being about the most despicably inhuman king that ever sat on a throne; a tyrant and a bigot who ruined the noblest empire under the sun. Napoleon III did it, and what became of him and his dominion? Did the name of God deliver him from his spiritual foes? Pope Pius IX was eminent in this achievment. To what end! Either the divine spirit is in the breasts of the people, or it is not. If it is, then how idle to write an acknowledgment of it on a sheet of paper. If it is not, then how idle! If the people are saved at all, it must be by faith in a *real* God not by profession of a *nominal* one.

In the ancient city of Prague, in Bohemia, there is a venerable Jewish synagogue, its walls so thick with grime as to be absolutely black. The synagogue must be lighted in mid-day. A superstitious piety forbids its cleaning. There is a tradition that

somewhere on the walls, the precise spot was unknown, the name Jehovah is inscribed, so that, if the walls were cleaned it might be rubbed out. Would it not be better to clean the walls and realize purity even at the risk of obliterating the word? The word does not cleanse the building; the dirt conceals the word.

Let us turn from these artificial and unnatural devices for realizing God, these fantastical inventions, and consider how reasonable, thoughtful, earnest people may do it. I have mentioned these instances simply to illustrate the necessity that men are under, from the constitution of their minds, to make God a real being, not an impalpable influence. Here, to begin with, is the outward world of nature, the material universe as we call it. How different the conception of nature is to-day, from what it was even a hundred years ago! We have been educated to think of nature as a crude, solid, substantial mass, which must be roughly dealt with; a stub born obstacle to intelligence. We now know that it is in ceaseless flux, irresistible, omnipresent, in perpetual action. We live in a living world. We speak now of force, of the correlation of forces. The doctrine amounts to this, that any force may be changed into another force; that its disappearance in one shape is no evidence that it is abolished. It reappears in another. There is al-

ways the same amount of force in the universe. It is never diminished: it is never increased. What a conception does that give of a living God, a creative power, which is generating, regenerating, animating every moment of time! protean in its shapes, single in its essence, dropping this form, assuming that, passing from shape to shape, always changing its semblance, its substance always identical with itself.

Listening to Mr. Tyndall's lectures on light, we were obliged to confess that the world was a mystery of glory; we felt that the sunbeam held us fast by a luminous chain. *Imprisoned in the world?* Imprisoned in liberty? Dungeoned in light? Such a thing is inconceivable. The universe emancipates. Nature is not an enemy but a friend; not an oppressor, but an emancipator. If we study it, adjust ourselves to it, it will give us wings, not hang leaden clogs on our feet. The name on all lips at this moment, is the name of Edison, who is astonishing the world with his studies on the phenomena of sound. This discovery suggests to the dullest apprehension, that the universe is vocal, that these apparently fugitive waves of sound which cross and recross each other are under law, that they can be measured and regulated, combined, subjected to the orderly service of man. There is another revelation of a living presence in the world.

Poets have always seen it. The immortal Shake-

speare, in those tremendous lines which have been quoted many thousands of times and never cease to be impressive, betrays his suspicion that the material world is but a mask:

> "The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit shall dissolve,
> And, like this unsubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind."

Goethe had a similar thought in his mind when he put into the mouth of his earth-spirit these resounding words:

> "Thus at the roaring loom of life I ply,
> And weave for God the garment thou see'st Him by."

The thought is never absent from the mind of our own Emerson; every one of his essays is full of it. He describes himself as watching the winter sunrise; as making his way under a cloudy sky at evening through a lonely region, plashing over wet marshes, guided only by the light of stars; as standing, musing in the woods, solitary and silent, listening to that voiceless presence that abides there, enchanted always with an unspeakable delight. This idea saturates those immortal essays on Compensation, on the Spiritual Laws, which contain the deepest studies on this theme that are to be found in literature. The poet sees it, for it is the gift of the poet to look behind the semblance, to pluck off the mask, to discover the reality, the soul of things, the creative spirit behind the painted show. The poet

discerns the analogies that hold things together, traces cause and effect, divines how forces must ultimate in effects. But are we not all in some degree poets? Who has not felt, by the seaside, in the woods, by the grave of a child, musing by a peaceful corpse, the mysterious sense of awe that penetrates to the very roots of his being, making him feel how little he was, how majestic, how awful, how sweet and tender was the animating spirit of the world!

But more impressive still than the world of nature is the world of circumstance. We who live in cities know little of nature; we see it through the crevices of the streets; a constellation here and there, a bit of sunrise or sunset. But there is no day when every one of us is not living and working amid human conditions, tied up in a bundle of life with more or fewer human creatures. Stop, reflect a moment, and the closeness with which things are riveted together, are constructed all of one piece, is astonishing. Affairs seem to go by luck, hazard, chance. The careless observer believes in accident. But the instant one stops and considers, he is convinced that there are no such things as luck, chance, hazard or accident; that a supreme necessity works through the world of circumstance, knitting part to part, effect to cause, each effect being a cause in its turn, until the universe is resolved into a close net-

work of laws. In fact if one thinks too much on this, the impression of destiny is overpowering; he loses all sense of individual existence; he becomes in his estimation nothing, a bit of straw before the wind, the crest of a wave. His personality is drowned. It is the easiest thing in the world to become a fatalist, a pantheist, to become persuaded that there is nothing real *but* God. The ignorant, the superstitious, the credulous, who must have an interpretation of every event, are perpetually committing the blunder of misplacing cause and effect, confounding their own fancies with the eternal laws. The Evangelical Protestant is convinced that if sickness befalls, or disease, or pestilence, it is because the people have neglected church going, have not listened to sermons, have omitted to say their prayers or read their Bible as they should. Does a child die? The calamity befell because its mother loved the child too much, loved it more than she loved its Creator, who would have no divided loyalty. Does public distress prevail? It is because the people have ceased to believe in the trinity. Tenterden steeple is the cause of Goodwin sands.

This is hopeless; such an absolute want of logic, reason, common sense, such resolute and complacent putting the cart before the horse, setting cause and effect at opposite ends of the planet, is stupefying. We must get away from this. It is simply the

recourse of desperation to keep God within some sort of bounds. We must learn to think, to be intelligent, to reason, to put things together. Give us an understanding heart, should be the prayer of every earnest and simple person. Here is the merit of science. The scientific method compels us to look at things as they are, to put causes and effects together where they belong, to classify phenomena, to disregard feelings, sentiments, prejudices, to classify things according to their constitution and relations. This is the immense service that science is rendering to this generation. It is compelling us to recognize the real, to leave out of sight the artificial deity. Talk of science as being irreligious, atheistic! Science is creating a new idea of God. It is due to science that we have any conception at all of a *living* God. If we do not become atheists one of these days under the maddening effect of Protestantism, it will be due to science, because it is disabusing us of hideous illusions that tease and embarrass us, and putting us in the way of knowing how to reason about the things we see.

But then, if I may be allowed to make a suggestion, it seems to me that the scientific method must be supplemented by the poetic. The scientific method is adapted to the understanding. It bids us consult visible facts, study palpable realities. The culture of the imagination, of the power

to go behind facts, to discern laws, to appreciate principles, to get on the track of everlasting forces, is of equal value with knowledge; I had almost said, is of supreme value. The poetic sense — do we not need more of it? Are we not too practical, too business-like? Would it not be of service to us to read oftener than we do in the great masters of imagination, who take us out of the small, low, irksome conditions of life, and enable us to lose ourselves in the contemplation of a vast universe? The study of art in its highest relations, the study of poetry, the study of the stateliest literature, the reading intelligently of the sacred books of the soul, something of this is needed to give us a new sense of the reality of that spirit which is real, though we know it not. We cannot anticipate a return of the old-fashioned faith in God. No new definitions are to be expected. No new forms of statement are to be looked for. But we may anticipate a time when the real God shall be felt as he is not now; shall be felt even by the thinkers, certainly by the earnest, intelligent, progressive minds of the race. When the name of God shall be identical with justice and equity, with truth, and freedom, and beauty, then will God become truly real once more; then He will become indwelling once more, a quickening motive, a keen inspiration to all greatness and goodness.

THE POPULAR RELIGION.

My subject this morning is not so much selected as assigned. I have not chosen it; it has chosen me. It is not a subject that is pleasant to choose, but it is a subject that is most important to be discussed. Part of the wisdom of the public teacher consists in his selection of live topics — topics, that is to say, that are active in the people's minds. I do not come here to answer my own questions, but to answer yours if I can find out what they are. And when it is evident that a question is active and burning in the public mind, teasing and agitating it, that is the question that the public teacher is called upon to deal with. The question touches then the connection between professed faith and actual life; whether the religious beliefs of the community hold a vital connection with the practical daily life of the community — a vital question,— I had almost said, the only question there is. Does the sentiment, the belief, the idea, the worship, the reverence, the adoration, the highest and sweetest desire

that is entertained by men and women act in a living and effective way upon the practical duties and the daily life of those very men and women,—does it or not? It is a matter of incidental importance what the belief is. The questions of papal infallibility and inspiration, the deity or humanity of Jesus, the reality or the dreaminess of the Christ—these are incidental and secondary. It is for the scholar, for the closet thinker, to deal with these questions. The question whether the belief we hold, such as it is, acts immediately upon our personal, social, domestic, public life, our life as men of business, our life as politicians, our life as professional men, our life as husbands and wives, sons, daughters, is a vital question. Because, after all, life demands the whole of every man and woman, not a mere fragment of him. We cannot go single-handed, half-minded or half-hearted into such conflicts as we are daily put upon. Life is real, is terribly earnest for most of us. There is not a living man or woman who faces the situation as it is put before him who does not need not merely all the muscle and nerve, not simply all the brain, but every heart throb, every pulsation of conscience, every thrill of spiritual life that he is capable of. He must go with heart and will, with intelligence and soul into the high-ways and by-ways of existence, or he cannot go successfully.

This, then, is the question: Is there, or is there not, a difference between the professed faith of the avowed community and its actual life — between the popular religion and popular duty? I do not raise the question. It is not a matter of speculation, of surmise, of skepticism; it is not a question raised by the spirit of doubt or misgiving. It is a question raised by life itself.

What is the most conspicuous, notorious, glaring and staggering fact that forces itself, and has of late years forced itself more and more upon the consideration of thoughtful men? It is the losing of the sense of immediate accountability; it is neglect of conscience; betrayal of trust; insensibility to the claims of our fellow-men upon us; a want of consciousness carried into these daily affairs of life with which we are dealing, everyone of us, in one form or another, all the time. Gigantic betrayals of trust, robberies, thieving, treacheries, fraud in all classes of the community, taint every department of Christendom, catholic, protestant, evangelical-protestant, liberal-protestant.

What does this imply? It implies that the popular religion, under whatever form professed, has lost its connection with life; not necessarily that it is untrue; not necessarily that it is discredited; but the coupling is loosed, the connection is broken. The professed religion absorbs an amount of senti-

ment, feeling, aspiration, that is taken away, is withdrawn from the working forces of society. It implies simply this, that men no longer feel the validity of the faith they profess.

Two classes of people entertain in a very different manner these notorious facts that the newspapers are full of, that are the talk of the streets. One class consists of the extreme heretics, infidels, radical disbelievers in the popular religion. These put the extremest construction upon the facts that we all know. They say it is now a demonstrated thing that the popular religion is merely professed. It is a mask, a screen, an appearance, a simulacrum. It stands for nothing. It is a mythology—something that hangs in the air; something to be dreamed of, to be talked of on Sunday; to be discussed in sermon and tract; but nothing to be believed in. Nay, say these men, more than this, it is a hypocrisy, a hollowness, a sham; nay, further, these men (for whom I am not speaking, but whose words I merely represent) these men say, how could anything better be expected? Does not the professed religion of Christendom, by its fundamental positions, undermine morality? Is it not essentially inimical to natural virtue? Look at its dogma of depravity: consider its constant teaching respecting Heaven and Hell; note its appeal to the lowest form of selfishness; carry out to its con-

clusion the doctrine of faith in the Christ as a substitute for personal goodness. Push to its logical result the dogma of supernatural grace, by which the priest in one church, the pastor in another, encourages men to think that their natural actions can be passed over, or covered up; that men have merit or demerit, not according to the qualities that actuate or animate them, but according to the qualities of the Christ, who becomes by faith a substitute for them. Is it possible, the objector says, that beliefs like these should be professed soberly, and honestly entertained for a thousand years, and that the virtue of the world should endure the strain? Is it possible that men should have faith in themselves, faith in their own conscience, faith in the living power of the will, faith in the qualities that adorn, beautify and sustain their nature, faith in their capacity to make this world better, when all the time they are professing not to believe in themselves at all; when all the time they are disavowing their own virtue, flinging themselves at the feet of a redeemer, and trusting that he will save them from the consequences of their own deeds? Is it possible that such a religion as the popular religion of Christendom, which is based on these opinions, should do otherwise than lead to just such things as we see, weakness, imbecility, fraud, neglect of duty, contempt for moral obligation?

On the other hand, the advocates of the popular religion claim that there is no necessary connection between the practical iniquity of the followers of a faith and the validity of the faith itself. These, it is claimed, are exceptions; these men who betray trusts have never felt the faith, have never been cordial believers; they are the exception that prove the rule. It is not true that the faith is hollow—a hypocrisy, and a sham. It is not true that it is invalidated by the trust and confidence of Christendom. In a thousand, ten thousand, nay, in a hundred thousand homes, in quiet places in the city, in all places out of the centres of the fretful and feverish life of modern times, we see men live by it sweet, noble, devoted, consecrated lives; there are happy families, loyal husbands, tender wives, children carefully nurtured, homes where every duty of life is punctually observed. We see men living above the plane of their worldly existence, and living so by virtue of the power of this immortal faith. It is not true, therefore, that the faith has lost its consecrating force.

Probably both of these representations are exaggerated. Neither side is all true. Both overstate their case. For it is not true that the popular religion has faded away; it is not true that the profession of it is hollow. It is not true that knowledge, which in some quarters has undermined,

has prevailed widely enough to touch the heart. It is true that, over wide reaches of Christendom, the holiest and sweetest things flow from the popular faith.

Nor is it fair to judge the professed religion by its written creed. The articles of no creed fully represent the life of men and women. The last thing to be altered is the language of a theological creed. It will stand for ages upon ages unchanged. After the spirit of it, the thought in it is gone, it will be defended, while the underground life of those who profess it, follows other tracks and obeys other laws, and points to other issues. How few people there are to-day, even professed Christians, who believe literally, sincerely, honestly, in eternal damnation! How few people cordially believe in predestination, in election, in the need of supernatural regeneration! How many people really believe in substituted righteousness? How many people make faith in the Christ the real substitute for their personal integrity and virtue? No, no, modern men and women will live according to modern ideas; will live on modern principles, will live for modern ends more or less. They will draw the inspiration for their life, not from the letter of their creed, but from the necessities of the daily situation, from the demands made on them by their daily contingencies. It is easy enough to quote the letter of

the Christian confession, Romanist or Protestant; to draw inferences from it in regard to faith and character, and yet the daily virtue goes on. Men and women educate each other; their worship is the worship of the heart—the natural heart—whatever it may seem to be.

But, on the other hand, is it true that the infidelity of professing Christians casts no reflection upon their professed faith? It is said, it was said the other day in a public paper, that one might as well declare that the infidelity of the individual lawyer reflects upon his profession of the law; that the unworthiness of a particular physician casts reproach upon the medical profession; that the instability of a merchant lays an imputation upon the honor of the whole mercantile class, as to maintain that the infidelity of a professed Christian dishonors Christianity. But, in all sincerity, does the parallel hold? The profession of the law has not for its object the increase of virtue, or the development of nobleness in those who profess it. It does not aim at making high-toned and good men. The profession of medicine has no eye whatever to the practical training in the highest standard of moral life of those who profess it. Neither does commerce nor any industrial art aim at the training of character. But religion does. The popular religion addresses itself immediately to character. It has noth-

ing in view but that. It is a training school in character. Its voice is addressed to the heart, the conscience, the soul. It implicates in every word the living sentiments by which men exist. It is nothing except an education in spiritual qualities. Its whole aim and purpose is not to make men lawyers, not to make men merchants or physicians, but to make *persons;* men worthy of their manhood, women worthy of their womanhood; and if it fails in this, then it fails as much as the legal profession would if it ceased to educate lawyers, as much as the medical profession would fail if it ceased to educate physicians, as much as commercial life would should it cease to make merchants. If the popular religion fails in working out a noble popular life, then it falls short of the very needs of its existence, and these facts, which we all know are of universal import, prove that it does so fail.

Let us consider this matter; and in the first place I have to say that the popular religion never pretended to reconstruct society. It does not come within its province to reorganize social affairs. This is not its mission or intent; it is not in its interior purpose; it is foreign to its constitution. The religion of Christendom never aimed at building up men and women after the fashion needed by society. It is a mediatorial system. Its whole object is, and from the beginning has been, to bring men into the

"kingdom of heaven." To obtain admission for believers into the kingdom of God—this has been its purpose, its avowed purpose from the first hour of its initiation until its last moment of history. I say this not in criticism of it, but in its vindication. What was the idea of Jesus? He announced it in the beginning, in language that bears its import on its face. It is no secret. It is written on every page of the New Testament: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." What was the kingdom of heaven? A new social state? a better society? a reign of justice, truth, brotherly kindness? Was it more humane government, nobler laws, a wiser and richer philanthrophy? No, the "kingdom of heaven" was announced as the reign of the Christ; the supremacy of the Messiah—a new order of things entirely; something wholly distinct from good laws, excellent government, nobleness of life. It was the coming in of a new creation introduced by miracle, established by supernatural demonstrations of force. Jesus, so far as appears, never thought of stimulating the natural powers of men, of establishing the supremacy of truth, equity, kindness, brotherly love. Nothing was further from his aim than to make this world,—men and women living as they do in it,—to make this world of institutions, social regulations and arrangements what philanthropists think it should be. To get people

out of this world, because this world was coming to an end, and to prepare them for admission into that kingdom which was *not* of this world,—that was his aim. The solitary condition of entrance into the new kingdom of heaven was faith in himself *as the Christ*, faith in the Messiah; not justice, not kindness, not truth, not brotherly love, but *faith in the Redeemer*, accompanied by obedience to his requirement. He preached virtue, and virtue of a very beautiful, tender and delicious description, but the virtues that he proclaimed were virtues necessary as conditions for entering into the "kingdom of God." Make yourself poor; give away your money; cease from all interest in mundane affairs; do not be anxious to change your condition; make no effort to become richer, greater, more potent in the world than you are. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth;" "Blessed are they that mourn;" "Blessed are the poor." In other words, the ethics of Jesus were the ethics of the millennium—ethics of a supernatural order—the ethics of the New Jerusalem.

This was proclaimed at the very beginning. This fills with imagery the first chapters of Matthew. This was the herald cry of John the Baptist. The church has only been true to its tradition. The popular religion has simply followed the allotted path. To gain access to the kingdom of heaven, to

obtain the privileges of it, to sit on thrones there and wear crowns—that is the promise. The kingdom of heaven has not been described as a new social state, an improved human condition, but as a reign of love *on the other side of the grave;* access to it has been offered to believers in the blood of the Christ; and the virtues commended as needful to secure entrance into it have been the same old virtues—*the New Testament virtues*,—not courage, manliness, perseverence, determination; not a love of freedom, not a resolute mind to make the world better, but rather a passive, lowly, self-abjuring disposition that would leave the world altogether, and postpone what this world can furnish for what the other world can bestow.

This is the idea—the old idea. Of course, the popular religion preaches morality; but as a secondary, incidental thing, not as a primary thing; not as a fundamental and everlasting thing. It inculcates virtue; but as of accessory worth as a condition of getting into the felicity beyond the grave —not the live, robust morality that men live who have to deal with life, in this feverish age of ours, but a morality that dispenses with that, because it is the condition of something else. Hence, I say that the popular religion, never having aimed to reconstruct society, never having aimed to bring a kingdom of justice and truth on earth, in failing to do it only fails where it never tried.

Further, and as a consequence of this position, I venture seriously and gravely to affirm that the popular religion never has done any great thing to regenerate actual society. I know this will be disputed. It is very commonly contended that the abolition of slavery, for instance, is due to Christianity. But Christianity never had any prevailing influence in the abolition of slavery. As we read history by the new methods, carefully, we see that anti-slavery sentiment and purpose were due to very different causes. Slavery has existed in every Christian country from the beginning until now, and has been countenanced by the popular religion. Slavery was brought to this continent by a Roman Catholic priest. It is a matter of notoriety that the earliest abolitionists were orthodox Christians, members in the best standing of Evangelical churches. It was their prime hope, belief and trust, that from these churches they should gain power to carry out the cause they had undertaken. They were disappointed; they were disappointed every time, and on every application; and they were obliged to abandon the churches in despair, on making the discovery that the popular religion was not favorable to the abolition of slavery, or to any thing that drew attention away from the Savior.

Those of us who have lived through a generation, can remember well the arguments that the popular

religion put forth north and south thirty years ago, in defense of the peculiar institution, as it was called, and all movements that were made against it. The simple truth is, that the anti-slavery sentiment, along with the American doctrine of the worth of individual men and women, the sentiment of liberty and equality before the law, came not from the Christian religion, but from its opponents. The anti-slavery sentiment in this country came directly from Voltaire and Rousseau, from the French infidels of the last century, who prepared the way for the French revolution—from men whom the church denounced and denounces still. It was part of their creed. It was introduced into America by men who had learned it in Paris. And now, in our own generation, the spread of this sentiment is due to the spread of those kindred sentiments and ideas with which it was connected.

What vital question of to-day does the popular religion undertake to answer? One of the vital questions of this generation of ours in all liberal communities, in America and in England, is the question whether woman, always held in subjection under the old regime, shall be classed as an individual, shall rank as a person, shall hold property, shall have a voice in making laws, shall have a share of control in education, shall, in a word, be a mind, stand as a conscience, exercise an independent and

effectual will in social affairs. This is one of the greatest, most difficult and most delicate questions of this generation—a question that all our skill, knowledge, sagacity is none too much to answer. Does the popular religion help us to answer it? does it add any element to the discussion? does it lend a single argument? does it give a single impulse? No; not one. It has nothing to do with it. It does not suggest it. The question is out of its reach. The only influence the popular religion exerts, is to stop the discussion of the question. It appeals to the Bible—the old testament and the new testament; it appeals to the words of the Christ, or it appeals to the usage of Christian tradition; and it would suppress the whole discussion, because it is not the province, it has never been the province, of the popular religion to reorganize society, to say how men should live in their families or their shops; how they should transact their business, conduct their government, make their laws. Its object is to get people into the "kingdom of heaven." For that purpose, faith in Christ is its sole, grand, controlling instrument.

Take another question of the deepest, most vital practical concern in our communities—how far shall the liberty of the press be carried? how far shall freedom of the mails be retained? how far shall speech, writing, thinking, be free in our modern

communities?—a most difficult question — a new question—a question that only modern communities can fully entertain, because such communities alone know what it means. We believe in public education; we believe in the validity of reason; we believe that men must learn and that they can only learn through discussion; and that truth must have a full, free, equal sway over the whole realm of mind. How far this freedom shall extend; whether there shall be any limit to it, and, if any limit, what,—are open questions; and not one of them is yet answered. The law with its finest finger is feeling its way into the complexities of the discussion. What has the popular religion to say about it? Has it lent an argument, an appeal, an emotion, an influence? Not one. It has nothing to do with it except to try to stop it. What did the Roman Catholic church do for ages but suppress freedom of discussion, freedom of speech, and as far as it could freedom of thought? And to-day, in New York, the popular religion puts forth its hand, seizes, arrests, and holds for trial a worthy, sincere, faithful, devoted man, who is charged with having sent blasphemous doctrines through the mail. Now it is not for me here and now to discuss the general question or to pronounce any opinion about it; but it is for me to say, that the popular religion gives no help whatever to the discussion, that, as far as the

popular religion intervenes at all, it is to stop the discussion, and that we protest against. One thing, at least, we may affirm, that no sect, no number of sects has any authority, or right, or title, to say that its opinion and no other shall be taught, shall be promulgated, shall be disseminated through the mails.

Take another question, one of the most vital, one of the most practical, one upon which, as some think, the very future of our republican institution depends—the organization of charity—the regulation of the constitution of things as established between the rich and the poor. Already there are signs that the desperate pauperism that is crushing old Europe, that is embarrassing England, is getting a footing and start in this country. Already it appears that poverty is becoming an institution, that people are growing up into the profession of beggary; that men and women think it is their title to live on the earnings of others; an evil this that goes to the very heart of our practical independence, because, if our modern society means anything, it means that every man shall earn his own bread by the sweat of his own brow; if he is poor, must bear his poverty or work his way out of it; but pauperism, beggary—that should be completely foreign to republican state. The organization of charity, the organization of philanthrophy, the question how we

are to check and prevent further necessity—this is perhaps the gravest practical question that is at present flung down to us to answer. This is one of the biting bitter problems of the hour. Science, political economy, knowledge of human nature, knowledge of history, kindness, the sense of justice and truth, mutual helpfulness—all these elements come in to help us to solve it. Does the popular religion do so? Does it add an element to the discussion? Does it make a way for us to do the needful work of the hour? Not at all. It appeals to the New Testament direction to give alms to the poor; it encourages wide and loose distribution of wealth—that is it encourages the fostering of poverty. It still, as far as it is believed in, sanctifies poverty; it gives countenance to the institution of pauperism. Whenever an attempt is made to combine the charitable associations of a great city, so that they shall understand each other, shall work in harmony, shall throw all their strength in the same direction, that fraud may be detected, and unworthy objects of charity may be found out and exposed, it fails; because the popular religion is interested in keeping alive its own sectarian organizations. Each church has a charitable society as a tender to itself. Consequently it is impossible, owing to mutual jealousies, to combine the whole charitable sentiment of the community to meet in a scientific spirit the

problem that is right before it. These are not speculations, are not surmises or guesses; they are not accusations. They are simply facts.

We know too that the popular religion is an effect as well as a cause. For it is not altogether true to say that Christianity has done so much for the world; another question is raised, What has the world done for Christianity? We see that religion takes its color from the people that profess it. It is one thing in the East, and another thing in the West. Catholicism never could have thriven out of Italy. German Catholicism is a very different thing. Eastern Christianity is one thing, English Christianity is another, and American Christianity is a third. It has as many systems as there are nations.

I heard a liberal preacher, not very long ago, eulogizing Christianity and ascribing to it every good thing under the sun, affirming that we owed to it all we had — popular freedom, liberty of conscience, noble sentiments, domestic purity; aye, he contended in his intemperate zeal, that but for Christianity, we would have never had a post office! There is another side to the discussion. The fact is that the popular religion is itself an effect — a creation of time. Christianity has come to be what it is through the active forces of mankind, who have made it to be what it is, modified it, shaped

it, had this taken away, that built up. We should never have had an altar, or a priesthood, or a confessional, or a shrine, or a censer cup, if Christianity had not had its dominion in Italy, where all those things were already established.

I am not arraigning the religion as a religion. I say nothing against its creed or its institutions. I can do justice to its glorious past: I know what it has done in its place and in its day; in those dark, bitter days when it stood for unity and peace; when its high dignitaries faced brutal emperors, and faced them down. I love to think what it is doing to-day in thousands and thousands of homes to educate people in truthfulness, in peacefulness of life, in love for one another; and I love to think what it might do if its enormous wealth, its power, its prestige, its magnificence, its popularity, were all brought to bear upon these problems of the hour. Will it ever be — can it ever be? The traditions of the faith are against it. The practice of nearly two thousand years is against it; the habits wrought into the minds and consciences of millions and millions of worshippers are against it. For an answer to these questions, for a solution of these problems, for the rectifying of these disorders under which we suffer, we appeal to science, to knowledge, to study, to an acquaintance with the facts of life, not to the popular religion which aims at getting men into a kingdom of God on the other side of the grave.

Things on this side of the grave are of some interest. Whether we shall hold together, and go on and build ourselves up, and make our crooked paths straight and our rough places plain, whether the curse of intemperance, and the curse of poverty and the curse of fraud shall be diminished — these are interests, and speaking for one, I care infinitely more about questions like these than I do for what is to become of me when this short life is ended. Am I a man? Am I doing a man's work? Am I meeting the call that is made upon me? Frederick W. Robertson, one of the noblest of the English broad churchmen, stated at the close of one of his powerful sermons: "Let what will become of the dogmas of Christianity; let men believe or disbelieve; honor, justice, truth, vitality, stand on their own merit, and always will hold their own; virtue will always be honorable." Aye, true; but how long will this steadfast, practical principle be respectable while they are made conditional upon faith in Christ, upon belief in the Christian dogma? They will fade; they will disappear; they will become impotent. We must rest, then, upon other foundations, upon their ability to meet the instant necessity. The sanction of these immortal virtues of truth and justice lie all about us. They are not in Trinity; they are not in the deity of Christ; they are not in the inspiration of the Bible; they are in

necessity, in a necessity that the world should go on, that the human race should hold together, that society should justify itself. They lie in the simple fact that we, here, thousands, yes, millions of people, are working out for ourselves the practical problems how to live above the level of the brutes, how to vindicate manhood and womanhood.

Let us study the facts that lie about us; let us study the relations with which we are entwined, and we shall find then, that every great virtue, every grand principle, every immortal responsibility, is based upon a rock of ages that lies underneath our feet. No belief, no dogma, no worship of an ideal Christ will start into life the dead sentiment of honor and truth within us, if we do not feel the force that our daily and hourly duty should have upon our immediate conscience.

THE NEW SONG.

I am to speak this morning on the new song of Christmas. I call it a new song; but it is the old song with a new burden—the old song of peace and joy, of hope and expectation for the future. It is a common impression, I suppose, that Christmas is a Christian festival. It is an unfortunate mistake. Christianity adopted the festival because it could not do otherwise; it was too dear to the heart of man to be abandoned; but so far from inventing it, Christianity has done what it could to take out the original spirit of natural joyousness, and substitute a spiritual emotion. The attempt has not been successful. In modern Protestant countries the Christmas has become to some degree humanized. In Germany the Divine Child is human, and in celebrating the birth of Jesus the light is reflected back upon the children of the family. It is the child's day, and every child is beautified and glorified on account of the beauty and glory of the Son of

Mary. The lesson of Christmas is not that our children are less worthy, but more worthy.

And there is this other significant implication in the festival. When a person has been really great and has acted with conspicuous nobility and beauty, it is presumed that all things above and below are in sympathy with him. "Fear God," says Emerson, "and where you go men shall think they walk in hallowed cathedrals." Love God and men shall love you. The greatest will bow their heads to virtue, the least will bless it, the rich will think themselves honored by its regard, the poor will be touched and softened by its benignant presence. All things conspire together in honoring sweetness of heart, dignity of conscience, purity of soul. There is no great, there is no little, there is no high, no low, no rich, no poor, when virtue is in the ascendant.

The belief in miracles, in the communication of the supernatural with the world, is a homely confession of this faith, in all men,—that they who will observe the laws of virtue may expect divine sympathy. The axes of the earth will bend to do them honor, and the eternal laws will come creeping up and will drop their potencies at their feet. Hence in the Christmas season, as men look back and see people glorifying and celebrating the birth of some great deliverer, they recognize the fact that they are

celebrating the birth of Purity, Truth and Goodness, the power of Justice to bring harmony among all conditions of men. This beautiful idea Christendom should be proud to inherit.

The humanity, too, it inherits. One custom on Christmas is to give bread to the hungry, send turkeys to the newsboys, and spread tables overflowing and over-burdened with plenty for those who have nothing to eat, in confession of that universal bounty which we all alike share. But this confession, as has been often said, was made by the ancients before Christ was born.

We read with new interest in this view, the story of Christ in the Manger,—the legend of the little child born in the night, born in winter; of the great kings coming from afar to bring their tribute of gold, frankincense and myrrh, to lay at his feet; of the angels making the night air vocal with their songs; of the shepherds following the star to the place where he lay; of the cattle mute but sympathetic, standing by. It is a symbol of humanity—it expresses the deep, original, cardinal sympathy that exists among all creatures.

This little child, who was he? The son of a peasant woman and a carpenter of Nazareth, born in a stable, because there was no room in the inn, where only those lodged who could pay for their accommodation. And yet the angels celebrate his

birth with song; he is one with the kings who travel from afar; he is of one blood with the shepherds who look in at the cracks of the door. How beautiful the symbol, the perfect unity of Heaven and Earth! the voices on the ground mingle with the voices of the skies.

We read the life of Jesus. That life is in the main mythical, largely made up of fable and tradition. It is impossible to know how many of the things he is reported to have said are authentic; how many of the deeds he is reported to have done, were actually performed by him. As the story of his birth is a legend, so he himself is one of those vast and beautiful legends that gladden the heart. The narratives describe a being of perfect humanity. In this great person we do not find a trace of jealousy, envy, hatred, fear, alienation, antipathy toward any created thing. Wherever he sees poverty, he relieves it; he sits by the beds of the sick; he quickens into life the forms of the dying. He has no fear of treading in strange paths. The one hated person in his time was the Samaritan. Words could not tell the depth of scorn and aversion that the ordinary Jew felt toward the Samaritan. He was an outcast; the child of Abraham would not eat with him, would not greet him in the streets, Yet, over and over again Jesus is introduced as praising the Samaritan. His greatest and deepest word "Verily

I say unto you, the hour cometh, and now is, when neither in this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem, men shall worship the Father; God is Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," this profoundest saying in the New Testament was, according to the tradition, spoken to a woman, and a woman of Samaria. There is with him no recognition of the distinction of persons. With equal ease and readiness he accepts the invitation of the Pharisee to dine, and invites himself to dine with the scorned publican. Nay, more loyally human still, as he sits at the rich man's board, he addresses compassionate words to a woman of the town, who creeps in and bathes his gracious feet with her tears. We find him going beyond the boundaries of the sacred country dispensing benign teaching among Greeks and Gentiles.

Scrutinize that life,—you do no not find an instance that displays anything but purest loving-kindness to all the world. He has no hatred, no contempt. The Pharisees drag before him a poor woman caught in the act of sin, fling her to the ground before him,—and with their fingers dripping scorn pointing at her, they challenge his judgment. A wave of the hand remands them to the closets of their own consciences—"Let him that is without sin among you cast at her the first stone,"—then

reaching down, the same hand lifts up the poor woman and dismisses her. Not a look in the eye not a tone in the voice, not a word from the mouth betrays a lurking scorn or horror. A perfect humanity is here; ideal, too pure and sweet to be imitated; a vision, but what a vision! Ah, if Christendom could only dream that dream once a year! If but once a year, when celebrating the birth of Jesus, Christendom could remember what that birth symbolized, what that Jesus was, and, besides sending turkeys to the newsboys, and spreading tables for the poor and famishing, would consent to lay by all prejudice, social, theologic, religious! If Jew and Christian, Gentile, Mohammedan and Turk would say: Now, to-day at least we are one; to-day we all celebrate the birth of the Divine child, who to us was Christian, to you was Greek, to you was Buddhist,—what a Christmas festival would be there! But no! it cannot be; nothing so great and glorious as that has ever been known in Christendom, or ever will be. It was the custom in the Roman Empire under one of the earliest Christian Emperors, for the poor to be visited, the sick to be relieved, the sorrowful to be consoled on Christmas day. Charlemagne, Emperor of Germany, commanded that on that day prisoners should be released. Tamurlane, the mighty conqueror and Prince of the East, ceased to persecute and kill the

Turks on Christmas day. These are beautiful omens, but such emblems do but serve to make more sullen and gloomy the path which Christendom has trodden. There is no hope that Christendom will ever justify in its observance the splendid promise of its author's birth.

Now what shall we do? Shall the Christmas festival be allowed to go unappreciated and unimproved? Shall we have no more a Christmas in which we can delight? Shall we make the season over to children? Shall we be content to perpetuate the old Pagan practice of making gifts to the young, decorating trees, and opening the way for a passing gleam of sunlight into the heart of winter, for those who have scarcely learned yet what winter means? Is the lesson of Christmas lost for those who are no longer young; for those who are immersed in the struggle of life; for those whose winter lasts not for a season only but for the greater part of the year; for those who literally dwell in darkness and cold; for those whose hope is faint, whose memory is bitter? Let us trust that the time is coming when the Christmas festival shall mean something for men and women as well as for boys and girls.

But what shall this be? The old Pagan festival is not what we want. This is calculated to please the children. The essence of the Pagan festival

was gratitude to nature, subservience to nature, submission to nature. The ancient people appreciated the physical blessings of the sunlight. The sunbeam was their regenerator, their benefactor and redeemer. Living, as the multitude have always lived, in cold and darkness, their lives unprivileged and bitter, hedged about by limitations manifold, they hung upon the coming of the sun, as the wretched, sick and afflicted, to whom existence is a nightmare, long for the morning. Nature worship was at the bottom of all their sacred observances. They adored the Sun god under the name of Apollo or Hercules. Their deities manifested themselves in the elemental forces which controlled their destinies. Each natural phenomenon expressed a divinity; the wind, the rain, the vapor, the river, the brooklet, the standing pool, silence, the echo. The soul of the universe took on innumerable shapes. The tree contained a deity; the bush, the shrubbery, herbage and flowers, had their animating spirits. Nature was peopled with gods and goddesses, beneficent or malevolent. Altars were built, fires were kindled; sacrifices were brought; hymns were sung; peans were chanted; prayers were made, partly to give voice to the sentiment of gratitude, partly with a purpose to propitiate the powers that lurked about, visible or invisible, to bless or to curse mankind. There was

no science for the multitude, no art, no literature, no consolation of mind or sympathy.

Hopeless and helpless, common men lived upon the herbage, and counted as for life on the springing of the grass. The beam of light was therefore their divinity. The chemistry of the sunbeam is understood now as it was not then; mankind's priceless indebtedness to the sunbeam is acknowledged as it never was before; the annual return of the orb of to-day from the grave of winter is celebrated with more intelligent joy. Still, we are something more than nature worshippers.

Neither, on the other hand, can we accept the Christian idea founded on the hatred of nature. Christianity has for its fundamental idea an abhorrence of nature, a loathing of everything natural. Nature in its view, was the source of evil. Nature held the hidden curse. Nature was a thing to be abhorred, to be repudiated and abominated. The birth of the Christ was not therefore to the Christian the birth of the Sun God. It was the birth of the Redeemer coming to rescue a race bound in sin and doomed to everlasting destruction. The religion thus animated, became grim, gloomy, awful and ascetic. It discouraged pleasure; it discountenanced joy; it frowned on mirth. Light and color, gayety and song were alien to its spirit. The lesson of Christmas to the Christian was not a les-

son of natural joy, or of joy at all, except as he believed that he was totally depraved, and that the deliverer had come to rescue him from the consequences of his natural sinfulness.

Now the modern man cannot believe that he is by nature a child of wrath. He cannot believe that the human race is lost. The sense of sin has departed from his religion. He does not believe in sin. He does not count himself a miserable sinner. He believes in the power of thought, in reason and conscience; in the strength of human hearts to subdue the natural forces. He believes that man is his own providence, his own deliverer and his own regenerator. He does not look for a special redeemer. To him the story of the birth of the Christ is legendary, a myth. He does not believe that such a person as the Christian's Christ ever lived. To him the Christian mythology is like any other; rich and beautiful it may be, but a mytholgy still, created by the imagination and fancy of men, not belonging to the domain of sober history, or accurate science. Therefore the Christmas of the Christian he cannot accept.

What then? is the Christmas festival nothing to us? Cannot we share the joy, the glorious anticipation of the better future for society which is implied in the symbolical narrative of the birth of the divine child? To me the symbol describes *the birth*

of the human,—the birth of the true humanity,—the birth of the spirit which makes man to be indeed man, and woman to be indeed woman. I would use here no vague phrases. Let me tell you briefly and plainly what is in my thought.

By the birth of the Christ, I see presented in allegory the birth of a living faith in us and for all, that mind has the primacy over matter and over all that is material and animal; the birth of a full, vigorous, active faith in positive knowledge, in science, in the power and potency of thought; the birth of a fresh and living conviction that the human reason, heaven-descended, coming fairly incarnated in men, sits on the throne, wields the sceptre and brings kings and peasants alike kneeling to its feet. The human reason is the first quality that distinguishes man, the human creature, from the animal beneath him, from the minerals and vegetables that lie at the foundation of the material earth.

By the human, again, I mean sympathy, the feeling in the heart of man's relations to his fellow-men,—the sentiment of kindness, the feeling of charity and good will, the conviction that each may do something more than he or she knows, to make the world better, to establish a semblance of brotherhood, to build up society in equity.

By the human, once more, I mean faith in the future, the persuasion that the world is to become

better, that a happier experience is approaching for mankind, that evils are to be restrained, that ignorance is to be diminished, that contentment is to be increased. This element of hopefulness, this sentiment of prophecy, this deep ineradicable prescience that to-morrow is to be better than to-day, that each year as it succeeds the years gone by, will bring some new acquisition of light and power,—this is to me the grandest quality in our human nature; without this we are not men or women. The man, the woman who does not believe in a better time coming through the prevalence of the finest human qualities, misses not the charm merely, not the ecstacy, the glory and excellence of life, but even more fatally the quality of endeavor, the patience, the courage, that make his life best worth having; for life without this is hardly worth living to the manly soul. To make it truly worth living, one must propose something, must feel that there is an encouraging conflict going on in which he can take a part; this makes anybody's life worth living. There may be a dull, inert, passive kind of enjoyment without this thrill of expectation; but there can be no robust enduring satisfaction without it. These three elements, faith in the primacy of mind, faith in the power of kindness, faith in the laws of justice, which are always regenerating, and which will make the future happier than to-day, constitute the greatness

of human nature, and these the symbol of the birth of the Christ indicates.

Let me illustrate in one or two respects the supremacy of the human over the inhuman. See it in the first place in regard to nature, the outward world, the material universe. The Pagans worshipped it with awful joy. The Christians abhorred it, laid it under the bann. What do we do? *We use it.* The human asserts its supremacy over nature. We are not afraid of the telluric forces. We are their masters not their slaves. We are certain they will serve, that they confess duty, and will aid valor. We do not worship nature. Neither do we detest it or scorn it. It is a storehouse of beauty, a magazine of use, a deep reservoir full of saving powers. In it is the promise and potency of all benefit for mankind; we go to it in humility and say, "give us what you have; yield us up your secret, unfold your mystery. We are feeble, you have power. We need tools, you possess them. Give us health for disease, safeguards for our defencelessness."

The chemist extracts from it the secret of its solid substances; the physicist weighs the imponderable elements of light, heat, electricity. The naturalist studies plants and flowers. The physiologist searches into the processes of life.

Thus we make nature our servant. She must

drive our factories, carry our letters, toil at our drudgery, and leave man free to do the nobler work that becomes him. She purges our minds of the fumes and fogs of ignorance, corrects our art, straightens our conduct, rectifies our philosophy, reforms our creeds. She abolishes the superstitions which ignorance of her engendered. Her terrors disappear; her mysteries facinate. Her combinations and resources are a ceaseless charm. Her volcanoes and floods, her terrible upheavals aud catastrophes we are coming to understand and to profit by, compelling her to yield antidotes to her poisons, and deliverance from her plagues. She responds to human prayers against herself. She cradles the Christ. Thus we have done with the worship of nature, and are justifying the Christian legend by making nature wait on the human child. To say that nature, brute nature, nature as she is, illustrates the eternal laws is to speak rashly. We have learned the necessity of going behind the scenes.

The natural religion which undertakes to show the kindness, wisdom and goodness of the Creator from the superficial arrangements of the visible universe, is out of date. Science refutes it. We have got beyond that. For against every form of beauty is overset some fashion of ugliness; against every spot of light, a patch of darkness; against

every agency that helps man on, an obstacle that drags man down; against every apparent blessing, a seeming curse. Creation is at war with itself, and waits groaning for the manifestation of the sons of God. The brute animals fatten on the blood of their kind. We sigh to put an end to this. We long to create harmony in nature. The sentiments of justice, of law, of goodness, are in the human heart, not in the material world without us, and we would compel the material world to take on the likeness of the human nature. We have but begun this, yet, but we have made the beginning. Modern science aims at this, and in time will accomplish it, thus making articulate one note of the angel's song.

We boast to-day and rightly, of the power of light over darkness. Is darkness then something positive, or is it something negative? Darkness, we have discovered, is the absence of light. There is no such existence as night. Day alone is positive. Yet darkness, though negative, has very positive effects; for darkness stands for superstition, credulity, crime. In the dark the beasts of the forest come forth. In the dark the imagination peoples the world with apparitions and spectres. These are the ghosts that walk abroad to affright mankind. Try to imagine the state of the world in those primeval times when people had no

means of lighting their dwellings except the sunbeam. How awful their winter! Was not darkness a positive power when it crushed the very minds of men, and compelled them to cower before the idle dreams and superstitions of their own minds? What a magical effect is produced in a dark chamber by merely bringing in a candle! The darkness is dispelled—*all* darkness; the nightmare is at an end; the spectres disappear. The solid terror is seen to be an apparition—a ghost.

Can one born blind ever be fully educated? Taught many things, he can be certainly; but how many things can be taught only by the help of the eye! And if the eye be extinguished, dense darkness settles upon whole regions of mind.

Is ignorance a negative thing? Ignorance is absence of knowledge. Yes, but what an absence is the absence of knowledge! All the enormities of society came from the absence of knowledge. Why do men hate each other? Why these wars and oppressions? Why the attempts on the part of one nation to pull another nation down? Why these mutual envies and jealousies? Why this conflict in the name of interests? Why the quarrels between religions? Why the antipathies between churches? Why the rival missionary enterprises, the restless efforts on the part of one church to put another church to shame? Why the battles

of the creeds? Why the dividing lines between sects? Simply because they do not understand each other; simply because the light has never come to their ignorance, because they have never been disenchanted of prejudice.

The delicious thing to my mind is, the humanizing quality of knowledge; its power to overthrow barriers, and enable sundered people to find each other out; its efficacy in furthering mutual understanding and encouraging sympathy. There is an interesting study, not born in this generation, not new to-day, though even at present limited to a few scholars and independent thinkers,—the study of *comparative religions*, the study, that is, of all the religions of the world from a scientific point of view, as products of the human mind. Able men gather together the sacred books of the race, read them with open, sympathetic minds, and note, not their unlikeness, but their likeness. The very idea is regenerating. The birth of it though barely announced, is the birth of a true son of man. A new song is sung, angelic in power and sweetness. The thought, that religions constitute a brotherhood; that religions are human; that faiths are substantially in unison, creations of the human mind, making attempt to voice thought and emotion, as well as conditions permitted; that no one church has a right to domineer over the rest; that

no one system of belief or of reputed revelation has supremacy over another,—establish that conception and at once the war of ages ceases. The *odium theologicum* is at an end. There is no more of that bitter and blood-thirsty hate which has characterized religious differences from the beginning of time. The reign of dogmatism is over. The creeds are disinfected. The demons are exorcised. The men who abhorred one another embrace. The churches that stood aloof, armed from head to foot, hold out hands of welcome to adverse sects. The priests no longer offer sacrifices to jealous gods. Missionaries carry intelligence, unity and the grace of the sympathetic spirit, explaining, not converting, obliterating, not deepening the lines of division between creeds and races. Civilization, not barbarism, accompanies their steps. At once the consecrated sceptre falls from the hands of priestcraft; the tiara is taken from the head of papal and protestant dignitaries, and a sweet feeling of sympathy reigns over the religious world from end to end. The bibles instead of frowning upon each other, exchange their best wisdom. Pious men delight to see how many bibles echo the same words; how from the consenting conscience of the race, in all lands and generations, comes the solemn attestation of grand principles. In this one illustration we have exhibited the truth

which no generation has been favored with as ours has been, of the supremacy of the human element over the inhuman in its worst aspects. When Prof. Huxley gave his course of lectures in New York on evolution, he made a simple but far reaching statement. He said in substance: 'I have no theory to defend; I have no doctrine to propound; no scheme of the universe to establish. I am not pledged to any interpretation of scripture. I study facts as they appear in my department, and come under my examination. Do you study the facts in your departments, and *you*, again, in *yours*. Then when we have all the facts there are, we can begin to form some idea of the creation.' The sentiment that animated these words spoken by a man of science, with modest courage, heralds a new future to the whole world of knowledge. Precious as knowledge is in itself, precious as facts are, such language communicates a spirit of love for the truth, of emancipation from creed and dogma, that is infinitely more precious, a spirit of pure aspiration, of simple honesty, of humility, trust and patience, which makes a new era in the development of mankind. Just as soon as the philosophical world, the religious world, the scientific world, shall find itself in sympathy with such sentiments as these, from that moment a child will be born over whose birth the angels may well sing their happiest songs.

One point more, the supremacy of the human over evil. This too was intimated in the symbol of the birth of Christ; it was the burden of the song which the angels sang, "peace on earth, good will to men." Peace on earth? good will to men? How enchanting the prophecy! how lovely the vision! how transporting the dream! No more alienations or antipathies, no more conflict of fancied interest, no more insane struggle of man with man, to secure by force what cooperation will surely bring. War is the evil of evils—the accumulation of evil; mention war and you mention every suffering, pain, affliction, every calamity, to which the human race is exposed; poverty, misery, widowhood, orphanage, untimely death, devastation of fields, breaking up of homes, cessation of laws, suspension of culture, the destruction of the forces that keep up human society, the demoralization, in short, of society, the overthrow of the pillars on which it rests; the arrest of the civilizing movements on which the progress of mankind is conditioned. We speak of what war has done, alas what has it not *un*done? The angels sing peace on earth. Has the church that calls itself by the name of the child—has the religion which boasts of him as its founder abolished war? Has it done anything to abolish it? Can it be proved that any great war has been prevented by the power of its ministrations? Possibly, this may have been; and

yet, for every war that this religion, so-called, of Christ has prevented, it has started at least one. The wars of the Church, the bloodiest, longest, most terrible that have been waged, were in defense of dogmatism. They have been wars of creed against creed, of church against church, wars to suppress thought, to maintain institutions that ought to perish; wars to check the growing spirit of liberty in man, wars against heresy, wars against faith. It has been asserted and by responsible men that Christianity has made more wars than it has stopped or alleviated. It has done so simply because it has not represented the human, but the inhuman element of narrowness and exclusiveness.

We look for the time when war shall cease. Through what agencies? Through preaching, sacrifice, ecclesiastical dominion? Not so, but through the prevalence of the human element of justice. How was it with the great war lately raging in the East? Before it could be declared, what counsels, advices, efforts on the part of people in Europe to prevent it, to effect an arrangement to make the outbreak unnecessary! and every step of the conflict itself was watched by the keen eye of the statesmen of Europe who were determined to do what they could to prevent its running beyond their control and so increasing the power of barbarism. But in what spirit were these efforts at prevention

made? Not in the spirit of brotherly love, of sympathy, compassion or pity, not in the assumption that all were subjects of a common salvation, all believers in the same truth, but that states were interlinked, that interests were coordinated, that nations were grouped together by human ties of responsibility, that all great interests were universal, and all real interests were for peace. There is a conviction that, if society is to go steadily forward, if the poor are to be richer, the weak stronger, if the oppressed and defenseless are to come in for their share of human rights, we must have peace, we must break up the prejudices that are born of ignorance and fear, of the inhumanity that has characterized every government and every religion that has been established. To be sure, we have not advanced very far. The true faith is a little child in the manger still, —not a man yet—but when this hope of the human, this conviction of man's worth and dignity, this sense of the supremacy of mind, this faith in kindness, this glorious expectation of a better day coming, when this shall become matured, wide-spread, universal, then what may we not see?

Three or four months ago I listened to a clergyman of an advanced Christian denomination, and heard him speak in a tone of despondency about the tendency of things in America. It seemed to him that we were going downward so fast that in fifty years

we should be behind Europe; all the maladies and crimes of Europe, were, he said, thronging upon us, and would crush us, if we did not mend our ways, go back to old prejudices, revive old laws! I do not believe it; if I see anything distinctly, I see that the element of humanity, respect for intelligence, reverence for knowledge, belief in the power of sympathy and kindness, faith in the power of human achievement is growing, is spreading, Help it to spread and we shall find that there is not an evil which we cannot with effort remove, not a prejudice that we cannot overcome without a sacrifice, not a mischief that we cannot avert. It is so; and all that is necessary is that we should feel that the human nature in us is coming to its rights. When the day shall come, the angels will sing their ancient song once more, but they will sing it in our hearts, and they will not only make the promise of peace and good will but they will fulfill it.

Thus the old song is susceptible of new modulations, which make it acceptable to modern ears. The Christmas festival becomes human, and in becoming human becomes universal. All can join in the celebration; all can share the joy. The world-wide character of the symbol is restored. The observance is accommodated to the humanity from whose heart it sprung. The Christian has a Christmas quite in the spirit of the sweetest tradition of his history.

The Jew can share it, for the Messiah sprung from his stock. The Rationalist can find pleasure in it, for the dogma having been converted into a symbol as it originally was, having become imaginative and poetic, answers to his aspiration and sentiment. The Mohammedan is not excluded, for his faith is an outgrowth from the Christian. Even the far off Oriental is at home with the family of worshippers, for the lovely symbol that associates and unites them was his before it was theirs.

What a Christmas it would be if all the faiths were to celebrate in concert the ancient festival in this high spirit! Were the teachers of each to illustrate and enforce the lesson of unity, peace, and concord, sounding, each in his own tongue, the note that swells the mighty symphony of human belief! Were the effort made but once a year, to exhibit the unisons of the soul so grandly that the memory of the discords should be forgotten and an impulse to cordial brotherhood be communicated from end to end of the adoring Earth!

What a Christmas, if, but once a year, the growth of the young child could be traced in new institutions perpetrating the purer conscience of the race, in laws reflecting a more humane sentiment, in customs better according with an enlightened feeling of brotherly love, in domestic, civil and social arrange-

ments that correspond to the poetic anticipation of the Nativity!

Not yet, at this age of the world, is the divine child born, except in symbol and dream. Not yet is he born in the heart of his own worshippers. No human organization serves yet for his perfect cradle. Only here and there the materials for his manger are collected in some association that pities the outcast, honors labor, rescues brute animals from cruelty, or seeks to level the irregularities of human conditions. But the idea is abroad: the sentiment is awakened: the desire is kindled, and will bring about its own fulfillment. The unisons of faith have been sounded. The unisons of charity will be voiced ere long. Leigh Hunt, standing with his friend Shelley in the cathedral at Pisa, remarked, as the organ was playing, and the crowds were kneeling on the floor, that a truly divine religion might yet be established, if charity were really made the principle of it, instead of faith. His friend murmured "AMEN."

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast:
Man never is but always to be blessed."

These words of Alexander Pope express in no exaggerated terms the universality of expectation in the heart of mankind. Men are always looking forward towards something better. There never has been an age, there never has been a people that has not hoped, dreamed, anticipated, built castles in the air, cherished visions of the happier time coming; an unreasonable hope, for the most part, born of imagination and fancy, a dream, an illusion, yet so vivid, so intense, so enchanting, that it has been mighty enough to deaden the present sense of pain, loss, deprivation, and to keep men looking forward even when experience seemed dragging them backward. The hope naturally took color from the dispositions of those who entertained it. It was the reflection, the inverted image, of their doubt, or fear, or distress. The men of the tropics

have visions of a time when there shall be no more heat. The Esquimaux at the north pole have visions of a time when there shall be no more cold. Always the vision reflects what is wished for, the intensity of desire, not the immediate condition which is experienced.

It still, however, remains a question what basis this expectation had, for some basis it must have had. Even the air-plant does not live entirely on air. The orchids attach themselves to something. The nightingale is but an embodied song, yet the little gray bird perches upon a bough, branch, twig. All vision of the future has a ground in the nature of man. The ground is always the present distress, the sense of discomfort, pain, uneasiness. The present does not stand in contrast with the past, for as a rule, men know but little of the past; formerly even less than now; in uninstructed lands far less than in the centres of knowledge. Mankind has a feeble memory. We look back but a short distance, and everything except what is pleasing is quickly obliterated. We do not long remember suffering, disappointment, anguish, or pain. These soon disappear, leaving no trace, but the bright occurrences, the happy hours, the joyous coincidences —these remain. The period of childhood seems, in retrospect, to have been happy, because it is the most remote. The ancients put their Eden in the

past, because they knew nothing about it. After a journey in foreign lands the traveler remembers the glorious sights he has seen, the merry days he has passed, the charming acquaintances he has made. The weariness, the fatigue, the pain, the emptiness, this is forgotten. Had men known about the past they would not have imagined their paradise there. As they have learned more about it they have removed the golden age and set it further forward, until at last they come to dream of it as not being in the past at all, but in a future more or less remote. Now it hovers as a vision before only the most audacious hopes of the most resolute believer. Out of the distress of the present, for that is real, comes the expectation of the future. Who is happy? Who has all that he wants? Who can put his hand on his breast and say, he is ready to die, having fully lived? The majority of mankind have not lived at all, have no adequate conception of what life means. Ignorant, superstitious, fearful, oppressed with care and labor, their foreheads bowed down to the earth, they have literally no conception either of the possibilities within themselves, the possibilities of society, or the possibilities of the great universe, tingling with life, that blazes and rolls around them. Hence the universality of expectation. If the world were happy, it would not desire a bliss beyond. If men were satis-

fied they would not hunger and thirst for unattained good. It has been remarked by one of the sages of this generation, that in proportion as men become reconciled to their condition, the longing after a better condition beyond, will fade away, until at last it disappears. Not the happy, but the unhappy, he thinks, anticipate a paradise beyond the grave. And who are the happy? The few. The unhappy are the many. Consequently the many hope, long, expect.

The Prophetic Conference that met two months ago in our city, gave expression to one aspect of the hope that animates Christendom; to but one aspect, and that the smallest, narrowest, least popular and human of all. For not only were there present no disbelievers in the particular anticipation cherished by the callers of the meeting, none who criticised, doubted, rejected; not only were the Jews unrepresented, who always as a race, have entertained the hope of the Messiah's coming, and from whom this particular anticipation came; but even those who most ardently look forward to the coming of the Lord were absent. The second adventists who make a point of foretelling the times and seasons, were not present, even by invitation. Their prevision was too literal. There was no Swedenborgian present, for the reason that the Swedenborgian's expectation of the future is too

spiritual. None but those who cherished a single phase of the hope of Christendom were asked or welcomed; and yet even this narrow interpretation of the Christian hope drew crowds, interested thousands, and was a matter of comment in the daily press.

This hope of the second coming of the Christ is by no means, to the multitude of believers, the idle, vaporous, visionary, fantastical thing that it is to me and to some of you. It is a very real, vital, earnest anticipation. The root of it is found in the history of Israel; the expectation grew out of the distress, the misery, the persecution to which Israel was subjected. Through the chastening of their most disconsolate experience, the Hebrews were brought to anticipate the coming of a Messiah, under whose sceptre Israel should be raised to supremacy as a nation, the temple rebuilt, Jeruselem made the central city of the world; the elect people being summoned from all parts of the earth to the new kingdom of God. This was the expectation, as far as I read, in the time of Jesus. This, as far as I can learn, was the expectation of the disciples of Jesus; this was, it appears, the expectation of the master, himself. There is every reason, in my judgment, to think, that Jesus anticipated his visible and personal return as the Messiah. In no respect, as far as I can see, did his expectation

differ from that of his nation. Such continued to be the expectation of the age that succeeded him. The apostle Paul, some of whose authentic writings have been preserved, diverted the thoughts of christian believers from the original, material form of the prejudice. His idea was that the Christ was coming personally, visibly, in power and splendor, but in a "spiritual" body, etherial, floating, not composed of earthly stuff; was coming not to the earth, but to the clouds. The believers in him instead of receiving him in Jerusalem, were to be themselves transfigured, "changed" into impalpable shapes, and lifted up to meet their Lord in the air. The dead in Christ were to rise first; afterward they who were still alive were to be transformed, their mortal flesh being laid aside, and in place thereof spiritual garments of light substituted, which being lighter than the atmosphere, would enable them to float upward from the ground. Being collected in mid air by the Saviour, they were to be straightway transported into the realm of light. In the meantime, the old world was to go on in its bad, godless way, until the end, when the final day of judgment would settle all accounts. This strange hope continued, we know not how long. In time it disappeared. History disappointed, baulked, disproved it, changed it into illusion, consigned it to the realm of dream. For

the Messiah did not come. He never came either in mortal form or in the spiritual body. He never appeared visibly on the earth or in the clouds. No awful trumpet sounded; no waving pinions of angelic hosts disturbed the air. The old world rolled on its course without jar or pause; believers and unbelievers died, were buried, mouldered away, were dissipated in elemental gases, were forgotten.

Then a change came over the old expectation. The greatest father of the church, Origen, started what is called the allegorical theory of interpretation, the application whereof to this ancient belief was direct. On this theory, men instead of expecting the personal, visible return of the Christ, were to look for his coming in the prevalence of his truth, in the spirit of his gospel, in the knowledge of his salvation. The language of the New Testament, it was maintained, is figurative language, not to be literally understood. Believers are not to take it verbally; are not to believe that a trumpet will sound, so that ears can hear it, that forms will appear which eyes can behold. The description is intended for the mind's eye. The words are in import spiritual, intellectual, symbolical.

This view was too fine to be entertained by any but intellectual people. It remained, and still remains, the view of a comparatively small and select class in Christendom. The multitude insist on be-

lieving then as now that the very Christ must come in person, in visible and palpable shape. At the expiration of the first thousand years of christian history, this hope shook the heart of Europe with mighty forebodings. Men fell on their knees in terror. The christian world writhed in fear. It was thought that the world was then to come to an end. The thousand years of grace announced by the seer of the Apocalypse had expired, and men listened with intent ear for the awful sound, which was to awake the dead and call the living away from earth. The century passed by; still the inexorable laws of nature held on their even course. Prophets resumed their practice then of counting the chances, scrutinizing the figures, calculating the times and seasons. Scholars in different parts of the world, endowed with curious learning, announced on the authority of scripture that on such and such a day the Lord would come. He never came. He never will come.

Still the hope is entertained, and it now falls into two great divisions; on the one side are those who believe that the Christ will come before the millennium, to establish it; on the other side are those who believed that he will come after the millennium, to consummate it. The opinion of the first named was represented in the recent conference. The idea simply and literally stated is that enter-

tained by St. Paul, that the Christ is to come in personal and visible form; that the believers will be caught up in the air, the dead rising first, the living joining them, and both together carried into the realm of light. Then the world will be left to its ignorance, its turpitude, vice and sin for an indefinite period, running down, of course, all the time. Finally will come the judgment and the closing up of all terrestrial affairs. Those who believe that Christ is to come after the millennium entertain a more rational, certainly a more spiritual view, for their idea is that the truth must prevail first; that only when the world has been converted as far as it can be to the Christian religion, will the Lord come to seal and sanctify, to judge and perfect his work.

Do you ask me which of these ideas I entertain? Neither. What I think of them both? I think they are both foolish, wild, utterly extravagant, baseless and fantastical.

The common element in this christian hope, however entertained, is that the Christ is to come personally and visibly at some time. Let us, while pronouncing this idea fantastical, confess that they who entertain it are in the main earnest; many of them are noble and even consecrated men. The idea sums up all that they can anticipate of true and beautiful, of noble and excellent. The coming

of the Christ is in their expectation the coming of liberty and light, of justice and charity, purity, beneficence, fellow feeling, kindness, all over the world. Their idea of the coming of Christ corresponds with our idea of the inauguration of a perfected humanity.

Let us now contrast in two or three sharply defined points this old vision of the future with such a vision of the future as reasonable people may feel encouraged to entertain to-day. In the first place the old idea, the christian idea, is *fanciful*, both as to its basis and its character. The modern idea is rational in basis and in character. The christian expectation rests on texts of scripture, on texts of scripture only, not on observation. All observation is against it. Not an experience justifies it. All experience is against it. The course of history from the beginning runs the other way. The belief rests on scripture texts from the old testament and the new. The texts are very plain. There are a great many of them; they came from pens popularly supposed to have been directed by the Holy Spirit, and held by inspired men; still they are only texts. Suppose the texts to have been written in books of unquestioned genuineness and established authenticity, as they are not, for the so called sacred writings have been riddled with criticism,—suppose the declarations in

question to have fallen without a possibility of doubt from the lips of Jesus himself, we should be constrained to believe in that case that he was mistaken, not that they were true or credible.

No texts, no accumulations of texts, will establish a point which all experience is against, which all reason refutes. Literary statements are only literary facts. Yet this is the sole basis of the popular christian expectation. It cites no other; it suggests no other; it asks no other.

The basis of the rational expectation is what all the world calls fact, as opposed to fancy; it is observation, experience of life. There is a profound saying in the writings of Paul to this effect: "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and the hope will not be put to shame." Analyze this statement. Tribulation, that is wear and tear, the friction of nature and life, the stress and strain, the rolling and tumbling as of stones upon the beach, pounded and tusseled by the waves, the incessant trituration of suffering, sorrow, and sin; this is the tribulation that worketh patience. Patience is the power to stand firm, to endure and suffer, the power to bear up under heavy weight, to grow strong under pressure of circumstances, becoming solid from resistance to superincumbent burdens. Patience, in its turn, begets experience, the fixed possession of

character. We speak of the experimental sciences; —they are properly the only sciences, knowledges, there are, being the result of experiment, of trial, the ultimate acquisition. The result of all this last effort is hope. Men speak of hope as if it was some visionary fantastical thing, the perfume of the rose, the color of the lily, the hue of a cloud at sunset; the light of a star, the sparkle of a beam of light on a polished surface,—something that passes, is evanescent. It is on the contrary, the culmination of all that is profoundest in experience. It is the last result of the suffering, the pain, the tribulation of the ages. It is the final product of all the past. It is the silvery cap of the Jungfrau, which catches the first beam of the sunrise, and the last flush of the dying day, and in the moonlight shines like a star, because it has beneath it the chain of the Alps, whose roots fasten upon the core of the globe.

Thus, while on the strength of a few texts the christian believer has a vision of the future coming of the Christ, on the strength of man's experience, his observation of the world, his study of history, his knowledge of the laws of nature, the rational man has a vision which dwarfs the other into nothing; a vision of a new heaven, where all is order and peace, regularity, harmony, serenity; a vision of a new earth, whose rain drops are counted, whose very storms are made tributary to peace, whose

winds are chained to chariots which convey myriads across the continent, whose mountains are leveled, whose oceans are made tractable to steamships, whose rivers are bridged, whose lightning carries messages from realm to realm; visions of a new society, emancipated from idle fears and superstitions and terrors; a society, intelligent, instructed, master of the conditions of prosperous life, temperate, reasonable, pure, self-restrained, using gifts, not abusing them, not wasting, but employing the opportunities so prodigally supplied; the vision of a new humanity, where all conspire together to make the world better than it is, to promote justice, establish truth, make sympathy, kindness, love, the law upon which men live and work; the vision of a new intellectual world, where there will be no more sects or schools, no more disputations, or controversies, when men in a scientific, philosophical temper, shall study truth together, in the spirit of earnest seeking; where there shall be no more quarrel between those who have little and those who have much wisdom, but where the wise and the foolish, the intelligent and the simple, shall combine their acquisitions for general service.

To present in further contrast the character of the new hope, as distinguished from the old,—the rational man has a vision of a spiritual future when the word religion shall be more than the

word Christianity; when faith shall be more than churches or creeds; when no more shall be heard of Romanism or Anglicanism or Protestantism; when Baptists, Methodists, Unitarians and Rationalists shall acknowledge each other's peculiarity, shall be glad of each other's prosperity, shall emulate each other in the pursuit of humane ends. Contrast these two conceptions thus presented. Can anyone who places them candidly before him, doubt which of the two is the more excellent, which has the firmer basis, which the nobler aspect?

Present the two in another contrast, as to the respective methods by which the grand culmination is to be brought about. The christian method of realizing the future proceeds according to the rule of *revolution*. I say the christian vision of the future works by the method of revolution. The zealots of the time of Jesus anticipated a complete overturning of the political and social institutions of the earth. Jesus himself in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, in which he is brought forward as describing the catastrophe which is impending, speaks of "wars and rumors of wars, nations rising against nation, kingdom being arrayed against kingdom, famines, pestilences and earthquakes in diverse places," fears, hatreds, tribulations, such as the world has never seen; sudden overthrow of everything that existed, so sudden that of two

men working together in the field one should be taken and the other left; of two women grinding at the mill, one should be taken and the other left; the man enjoying a siesta on the roof-top would not have time to come down; so instantaneous would be the coming of the kingdom that he could not gather up his clothes. So sudden will be the calamity that the man in the city will have not time to advertise his brother in the field; the man in the field will have no time to return to the city for his goods. St. Paul, no less, though after another fashion, expected revolution. The managers of the recent Prophetic Conference believed in revolution. When men say that all the good people of the world are to be suddenly taken out by supernatural interposition; that the world is to be allowed then to run on in its evil course on the strength of its ignorance, vice, superstition and evil, they affirm the approach of revolution, a violent interference with the natural order of society. The silence of the process does not affect its character.

Contrast this with the even method of *evolution* which holds that every cause has its effect, that every effect has its cause, that the condition of things at any one time corresponds exactly to the condition of things that went before; that the world goes on quietly, steadily, from step to step, one phase introducing another, the movement never

resting, never hasting, proceeding with no leap, no interval, no chasm, but with serene onward march. This is the idea of evolution. The world is as good as it ought to be, considering what the past has been. We have gone as far as could be expected. In this view the good and the bad must share fortunes together. None are perfectly good. None are wholly bad. All good people have the seeds of evil in them. All bad people have in them the seeds of good, and the exigencies of progress demand that the wise and the foolish, the educated and the simple, the accomplished and the ignorant should be thrown together in mutual co-operation and sympathy.

Once more, contrast the christian with the rational view in another respect. The christian theory assumes the supernatural. The rational theory disbelieves in the supernatural; its faith is in the natural. The christian theory, I repeat, assumes the action of supernatural forces. The idea of the supernatural force comes in at every point. It is fundamental. Without the supposition of a power breaking in upon the world, the whole theory falls to the ground.

The most energetic party at the time of Jesus believed that the Messiah was to be, though a man, not a *mere* man, but a superhuman being, divinely commissioned and endowed, gifted with powers

capable of holding in suspense the laws of nature, miracle working powers. The disciples of Jesus claimed that he was more than man. He claimed something of the kind for himself. He had no doubt that he was to come in the clouds, with a host of angels, heralded by a great sound of a trumpet. There was to be war in the heavens. No created man was to pronounce the final judgment; even the Christ was not a deputy with full powers; Jehovah alone, coming by his own immediate messengers and agents, was to complete the work. But the Christ was necessary. This was the idea prevalent in the Apocalypse. This was the idea of Paul. This is the idea of believers in the second coming of the Lord. They have no confidence in the unassisted power of man.

This belief in the supernatural pre-supposes disbelief in the progressive advance of mankind. But, as we become better acquainted with history, as we study more closely the relations of man to man in the past, one thing seems absolutely certain, namely, that the enormous changes that have been wrought in the globe, the improvements that have been made in the condition of mankind, the achievments, material, social, moral are due to man, to natural industry, forethought, prudence, endeavor, earnestness, enlightenment. Nothing has been done that man has not done. The very imperfection of the

work attests the workman. No more justice has been applied to human relations than a half taught conscience has exercised. There has been no more kindness, sweetness, sympathy than was possible to a passionate, self absorbed heart; no more energy than was actually incorporated in an unsteady will. All the immense achievements of the ages have been executed consciously or unconsciously by human agencies without helping interposition from the supernatural world. This is the presumption, and it is a reasonable one. If it were not so, how comes it that the state of man is no better? If we have the immediate benefit of helping angels, how comes it that we are so sorely needing help? If a saving Christ, a loving, omnipotent God, is content to leave us as we are, then I think one may be allowed to doubt either the omnipotence or the kindness.

The doctrine of evolution, of a gradual, slow, silent progress of the world, is the only doctrine that accounts simply for the pain, the ignorance, the meanness, the infirmity and the sin of the world, as it is.

One more point in conclusion. I contrast the christian expectation with the rational expectation, on the ground that one is partial and the other universal. The christian dream of the future is a dream that only christians can entertain, a dream

that portends felicity within the bounds of Christendom, and to Christendom only. Interpret Christendom as generously as you will, as largely and broadly as your catholicity may prompt, say that the hope is not for those only who believe alike, but for all who feel, aspire, love alike. It is at all events under some form of limitation; it is for the exclusive benefit of those who are Christians, not therefore for Jews, not for pagans, not for the infidel, the doubting, faltering, cold hearted; unless these become evangelical Christians, according to some definition, there is no promise or hope for them. Stretch the hope as widely as you will, it stops at the confines of Christendom. The reasonable hope, on the other hand, is for all mankind alike, for one as much as another, for the believer and the unbeliever, the philosopher and for the boor, the saint and the sinner; for all who work together, hold together, live and suffer together. It is simply impossible that in a world like this, where all are necessary to each, and each is necessary to all, the outcome should not benefit all. Therefore in this one point, were there no other, the case would be decisive against the christian idea.

One point remains, that cannot be discussed, that cannot be dwelt upon or more than touched upon, the point whether this glorious vision of the future is to be entertained by the individual man or woman,

whether it is a vision for the person as well as a vision for the race. That the human race can entertain this great expectation is no longer matter of doubt. Whether I can for myself, whether you can for yourself, we may not say. The future is wrapped in cloud and uncertainty. Undoubtedly in any particular generation there are few if any who do not share more or less directly in the benefits that accrue to that generation: but whether in the grand consumation of ages the *individual person* will be a partaker in the ultimate felicity, must be left to conjecture.

This is that old problem of immortality which comes home to every one of us, and is at times of the most vital and uttermost concern. When we feel the want and misery of life, the disappointment, the weakness, the suffering of existence, we would fain have present assurance. But we have to bow our head and wait.

I cannot discuss that here. Let me, however, in conclusion say a single word, that so far as expectation of immortality is selfish, in so far as it turns upon the expectation of private felicity, it is not generous, it is not noble, it is not becoming for those who call themselves human beings, and consequently it is not reasonable. Only in proportion as we put selfishness away, as we forget the teazing claims of individuality, lose the exorbitant sense of per-

sonal right to happiness, only, that is, in so far as we cherish human sympathy, a large and generous fellow feeling with our kind, are we happy, noble, or excellent. Only in so far as we cultivate these universal sentiments shall we be prepared to enter into any heaven that may be offered to us.

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